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AUTHOR Rocheleau, Ann Marie
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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a process evaluation of the first year of the Lancaster Visiting Cottage Program, a program developed by the Massachusetts Department of Corrections to provide overnight visits between children and their incarcerated mothers. Chapter I provides an introduction to the report. Chapter II reviews the literature on incarcerated mothers and their children and gives an overview of programs presently in operation in other states for this population. As background for the description of the Visiting Cottage Program, chapter III briefly describes other Department of Corrections programs for incarcerated mothers. Chapter IV presents the research methodology used in the evaluation, examines the frequency and use of the program, and describes the program's first-year applicants. The time and effects of separation on incarcerated mothers and their children is discussed in chapter V. Chapter VI contains 10 sections, each highlighting salient issues or findings of the study. Sections focus on: (1) feedback on the program's daily operation; (2) participation/non-participation; (3) security and disciplinary issues; (4) program staffing; (5) quality of visits; (6) inmates and mothers; (7) impact on Lancaster staff; (8) comparison of long-term versus short-term inmate mothers; (9) utilization of treatment services; and (10) interagency model. Chapter VII presents the progress made by the program toward the achievement of its goals. Chapter VIII provides a summary of the findings and recommendations for the future. (NB)

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# JOINING INCARCERATED MOTHERS WITH THEIR CHILDREN:

# EVALUATION OF THE LANCASTER VISITING COTTAGE PROGRAM

**Prepared by:**

**Ann Marie Rocheleau**
**Senior Research Analyst**

**Massachusetts Department of Correction**
**Michael V. Fair**
**Commissioner**

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## JOINING INCARCERATED MOTHERS WITH THEIR CHILDREN:

## EVALUATION OF THE LANCASTER VISITING COTTAGE PROGRAM

## ABSTRACT


The Massachusetts Department of Correction opened an innovative program in January, 1985, whereby children could visit overnight with their incarcerated mothers. The Lancaster Visiting Cottage Program, located at MCI-Lancaster, a minimum and pre-release co-correct[illegible]al facility, offers a private and comfortable setting for the extended visits in the program's fully-equipped three-bedroom trailers. The program was implemented with hopes that it would serve to reunite mothers with their children, help them to maintain or re-establish close ties and prepare the mothers for their eventual release. The planning and advising of the program were completed through an interagency model - a cooperative effort among the Department of Correction, other state agencies and private, non-profit organizations.

This report is the result of a process evaluation of the program's first year in operation. The research had three objectives: to provide feedback to the Lancaster staff and Advisory Board throughout the first year, to monitor the usage and participation of the program during that first year and to present a description of how the program operates.

During 1985, there were 111 extended visits between 30 inmate mothers and 51 of their children. Most of the visits occurred on the weekends, usually lasting two nights. Although some of the visits involved two or more children, the majority of visits involved a single child. Controlling for the length of time spent at Lancaster, the female participants averaged an extended program visit every 42 days.

Perhaps the most important finding of the evaluation was that the program was implemented as planned. Despite the initial skepticism and resistance to such an innovative program, it was smoothly implemented through the hard work of the program staff and with the support of the Lancaster administration and the program's Advisory Board.

Unfortunately, the level of participation expected by the program planners was higher than the actual level of participation achieved in the program's first year. This report highlights some of the staff and inmate theories regarding the low participation rate, in addition to presenting a statistical analysis of frequent, infrequent and non-participants. It appears though that no one reason can fully explain the level of participation and perhaps, that the expected level of participation itself may have been unrealistically high.

The evaluation also yielded a wealth of information regarding the inmate mothers who were program participants. For example, significant differences were found in the backgrounds and needs of long-term vs. short-term inmate mothers. This information coupled with the knowledge about the effects of separation and the needs of inmate mothers, can be utilized in future program and policy planning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# JOINING INCARCERATED MOTHERS WITH THEIR CHILDREN: EVALUATION OF THE LANCASTER VISITING COTTAGE PROGRAM

In January, 1985, the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) opened a program at MCI-Lancaster whereby children can visit overnight with their incarcerated mothers. The Lancaster Visiting Cottage Program was designed to provide residents and their children a more natural setting for visits to take place. It was hoped that the overnight and weekend visits would serve to lessen the stress caused to children and their parents by incarceration and to better prepare mothers to resume the day to day responsibility for taking care of their children. In 1985, over one hundred overnight visits occurred involving thirty mothers and fifty-one children.

Due to its innovative nature, a research/evaluation component was incorporated into the program for the first year. In addition to providing feedback to the program's Advisory Board, the objectives of the research were to present a description of the program as implemented and to gather information on perceptions of program impact.

This report is the result of the evaluation of the Visiting Cottage Program's (VCP) first year in operation. It begins with a review of the literature on incarcerated mothers and their children and an overview of programs presently in operation in other states for this population. Chapter III contains a brief description of other DOC programs for incarcerated mothers so as to provide some

background for the description of the Visiting Cottage Program itself. Chapter IV begins with the research methodology used to carry out this evaluation. It is followed by an examination of the frequency and usage of the Visiting Cottage Program and a description of the program's first-year applicants. The time and effects of separation on incarcerated mothers and their children is discussed in Chapter V. Chapter VI is made up of ten sections, each of which highlights salient issues or findings from the study. They include such program issues as the daily operation of the program, participation, security and disciplinary issues, staff issues, the utilization of treatment services and the interagency model of the program. Three other sections highlight issues involving the participants, namely, the quality of visits, inmates as mothers and a comparison of long-term and short-term inmate mothers. Chapter VII presents the progress made by the program toward the achievement of its goals. Finally, Chapter VIII provides a summary of the findings and recommendations for the future.

## II. PRIOR RESEARCH ON INCARCERATED MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Even though the percentage of the literature focusing on female offenders is meager in comparison to that focusing on their male counterparts, the literature on incarcerated mothers and their children is slowly but steadily increasing. Several major studies have portrayed this population and the problems facing these mothers and their children (Zalba, 1964; McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978; Stanton, 1980; Henriques, 1982; and Baunach, 1985). Others have focused on the legal aspects (Palmer, 1972; Haley, 1977; Sametz, 1980; and Brodie, 1982) and the psychological aspects of separation (Sack, Seidler and Thomas, 1976; McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978; and Gamer and Schrader, 1981).

In this chapter a review of that literature is presented, beginning with a profile of incarcerated mothers, their children and the circumstances surrounding their incarceration. The review also focuses on issues of separation such as caretaking arrangements, visitation and reuniting. Finally, a brief overview of various programs for imprisoned mothers and their children is given. It is hoped that this literature review will serve as a backdrop for the findings of this study.

### A. Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children

The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1973) reported that women in correctional facilities were predominantly young (70% are under thirty-five) and unmarried (61%) at the time of incarceration. While over half of the incarcerated females were white, a disproportionate number of them were black. Less than a third of these women had achieved a high school education and they had limited job skills

and job experience.

Studies on incarcerated mothers have found similar results (Zalba, 1964; Stanton, 1980; Henriques, 1984; Baunach, 1985; and McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978). For example, Baunach's study of 190 inmate mothers in Kentucky and Washington found that 58% were under age thirty and that 77% were not currently married. Sixty-nine percent of the inmate mothers in her study had not finished high school and 52% were unemployed at the time of incarceration.

It has been estimated that between 65% and 73% of incarcerated women are mothers[1] and that the majority of these mothers have children who are still minors. It should be noted that even though approximately 70% of incarcerated females are mothers, not all of them were caring for their children prior to incarceration. Three separate studies found that one-fourth of the incarcerated mothers were not residing with their children prior to their arrest and commitment to prison (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978; Figueria-McDonough, et al, 1981; and Glick and Neto, 1977).

Most studies have estimated that the average number of children per inmate mother is just over two. As would be expected, there is a fairly even distribution of male and female children. As for their ages, they range from being born during a mother's incarceration to adult children. However, a look at the percentages of children under seven years of age in three separate studies found it to be 42% (Stanton, 1980), 53% (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978) and 57% (Henriques, 1982). It therefore appears that a large percentage of children were dependent on their mothers before incarceration.

In all of the studies reviewed, property offenses made up the highest percentage of crimes for which inmate mothers were incarcerated (40% to 51%). The next most prevalent present offense was either for the sale or possession of drugs (24% to 33%) or for violent crimes (12% to 36%), depending on the types of

facilities under study. The majority of the inmate mothers in these studies had had prior arrests and/or convictions and many had been previously incarcerated.

## B. Separation Issues

The incarceration of women who are mothers brings to the surface a myriad of issues and problems for mothers, children and several state agencies. Separation due to incarceration affects both the mother and her children. It also raises a number of issues that must be dealt with. These include the child care arrangements made upon a mother's incarceration, the explanation to children regarding their mother's absence and visitation. This section explores these three issues and the effects of the separation.

### 1. Caretaker Arrangements

The first question that one asks regarding inmate mothers who were the caretakers of their children prior to incarceration is, what happens to the children? The answer depends on several factors including the presence of the father, strength of family ties, circumstances surrounding the mother's arrest, prior involvement of outside agencies and the mother's knowledge about her rights and sources of aid. In a worst case scenario, a mother might be arrested and detained without being given the opportunity to make child care arrangements. In the best of circumstances, children who live with their mother and either with or in close proximity to their grandparents, will have a much easier transition staying with their grandparents, especially if they are assured that their mother is safe.

If the mother is not able to make caretaker arrangements, the task most often falls on either the children's father, grandparents or other relatives. Many

times the initial caretaking arrangements are only temporary or do not work out and further arrangements must be made. Stanton's study of fifty-four inmate mothers and their children in four California counties found that three-fourths of the children's mothers were detained at the time of arrest and that over one-third of the children changed caretakers during their mother's detention and during her sentence (Stanton, 1980: 38). One-fourth of the children were separated from their siblings, half were not consulted about their living arrangements and almost half were forced to change schools.

Mothers who do not have the option of placing their children with relatives or friends end up seeking child care arrangements with social service agencies that place children in foster care. Additionally, children end up in foster care in situations where the caretaker relative is overwhelmed or unable to continue caring for the child.

A summary of the caretaker arrangements for children in six separate studies is presented in Table 1. As can be seen, the most common caretaker for these children were their grandparents. Children were placed with their grandparents, most often their maternal grandparents or grandmother, in 35% to 55% of the cases. The next most frequent placement, overall, was with other relatives or friends of the family. Placement with the children's father ranged from a low in McGowan and Blumenthal's study (5%) to a high in Zalba's study (24%), which is the oldest of the studies.

In all of the studies, placements with relatives or family friends were secured for at least three-fourths of the children. Children were placed in foster homes, in social service facilities or put up for adoption in 8% to 20% of the cases.

Table 1

Children's Caretaker During Mother's Incarceration as Found in Selected Studies[2]

| | Glick Neto | McGowan Blumenthal | Baunach | Stanton | Zalba | Henriques |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grandparents | 44% | 55% | 36% | 35% | 52% | 48% |
| Other Relatives/Friends | 32% | 26% | 25% | 20% | -- | 19% |
| Father | 10% | 5% | 20% | 22% | 24% | 8% |
| Agency/Foster home | 14%* | 8% | 19%* | 10% | 20% | 20% |
| Other | -- | 5% | -- | 14% | 4% | 5% |

*includes all non-relatives

Baunach (1985:30) found that 81% of the mothers she interviewed were satisfied with the living arrangements of their children. She also found that mothers of black children tended to be more satisfied with placements than mothers of white children. Glick and Neto reported similar findings in their national study (1977). Baunach noted that, "Dissatisfaction was frequently expressed by mothers who had little say in placing their children, by mothers with children in different placements, especially with strangers, or, often by white mothers whose children were placed with nonrelatives." She also spoke with a small number of mothers who expressed concern even though their children were placed with relatives. They worried about the quality of care their children were receiving and the ways in which they were being raised.

2. The Explanation of Mother's Absence

In addition to making living arrangements for children of incarcerated mothers, some explanation must be given to them regarding their mother's absence.

Much has been written about what children are told when their mothers or fathers are incarcerated (Zalba, 1964; Sack, Seidler and Thomas, 1967; Stanton, 1980; Gamer and Schrader, 1981; and Baunach, 1982 and 1985).

A summary of whether or not children were told the truth in three different studies is presented in Table 2. In Baunach's study, 68% of the mothers reported that their children knew about their incarceration. The other two studies showed wide discrepancies, with 82% of the children in Stanton's study and only 40% in Zalba's study knowing the true whereabouts of their mother.

**Table 2**

**Children's Knowledge of Mother's Whereabouts as Found in Selected Studies[3]**

| | Baunach* | Stanton | Zalba |
|---|---|---|---|
| Knew the Truth | 68% | 82% | 40% |
| Did Not Know the Truth | 31% | 18% | 60% |

*The percentages in this column refers to mothers, while the percentages in the next two columns refers to children.

Children who are not told the truth about their mothers whereabouts are most often told that their mother is in the hospital, in school or working far away. In their study of incarcerated parents, Sack, Seidler and Thomas discovered that approximately one-third of the familes practiced some form of deception. This ranged from the distortion of facts surrounding the incarceration to total deception. As one woman in their study put it, "We call this place the 'Women's Community College', but we all understand it's a prison, except we don't mention it" (Sack, et al., 1976: 621).

In her interviews with inmate mothers, Baunach reported that 51 percent of the mothers had told their children the truth about their placement. While some had accomplished this at their arrest or close after, other mothers had waited until their children asked questions or after they found out that relatives had initially told their children lies. Sometimes there is no opportunity for mothers to explain their absence. During these instances, caretakers or social workers become responsible for this unpleasant task. Eighteen percent of the mothers in Baunach's study said that relatives or nonrelatives had explained the absence and that they had concurred. An additional 18% said they did not know who explained their absence to their children and did not know the details of the explanation. Finally, 12% of the mothers reported that their children, often the older ones, had learned of the truth on their own. Some had been present at the arrest or had visited their mothers in prison. However, some had found out through newspaper or other media accounts of the crime or through friends.

Most children were reluctant to reveal the whereabouts of their mothers. In Zalba's study (1964), although 40% of the children knew their mother was in prison, only 6% had given that interpretation to others. Similarly Stanton found that only 3% of the children had told the truth to acquaintances. Sixty percent had given another story and 27% of the children either had said they did not know or had given no response at all to questions concerning their mother's whereabouts. In their study of the children of incarcerated parents, Sack and Seidler found that when the subject of the incarcerated parent was raised, "a sharp look of anxiety or rebuke such as, 'We're not supposed to talk about him', was common". Furthermore, "attempts to elicit from the children their explanation for what had happened to the father and why brought forth a wide range of responses". (1978:263).

In their summary of the decision to reveal a parent's whereabouts, Gamer and

Schrader anticipated "that concealment and deception serve to increase the child's anxiety. A youngster who is uncertain about what has happened to his parent is more likely to be preoccupied, worried, and fearful." (1981: 201). They further stated that children should be offered a clear explanation at their own level of understanding. Also "children should understand that they were not responsible for their parents having been sent away. They should be told, with sensitivity, the circumstances of the situation, the reason for the incarceration, the parents' current circumstances, and future plans as far as they are known". (1981:212). Stanton concurred and suggested that mothers should be advised to deal with the initial explanation to their children in a more realistic and open manner, appropriate to the child's age. She also thought it to be a mistake to encourage children to discuss their mother's problems with outsiders, stating that some children considered it a private matter. On the other hand, pressure on children to keep the truth secret often prevents children from discussing the matter at all and forces them to come to terms with the event by themselves.

3. Visitation

Once caretaker arrangements are made and the issue of explaining mother's absence is dealt with, the next issue concerns visitation. This raises a number of questions. Who decides whether or not children should be allowed to visit their mothers in prison? What are the factors that go into this decision? Finally, what are the possible effects of visitation on children?

Several studies have addressed these questions and also reported on the frequency of visits between incarcerated mothers and their children. As can be seen in Table 3, all of the studies reported that over half of the inmate mothers had received visits with their children while incarcerated. Zalba's study reported

the lowest percentage of mother's who had visits from their children (53%) and McGowan and Blumenthal's national survey found the highest percentage of mothers with visits (89%).

For those who did not have visits with their children, a variety of reasons were given. Some caretakers would not allow the children to visit their mothers in prison. Some did not have the means to take the children to visit their mothers and

**Table 3**

**Frequency of Visits/Contact Between Mothers and Their Children in Selected Studies[4]**

| | Zalba | National Study Mc Gowan & Blumenthal | Local Study Mc Gowan & Blumenthal | Stanton | Baunach |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 53% | 89% | 79% | 55% | 58% |
| No | 43% | 9% | 21% | 45% | 42% |
| Don't Know | 4% | 2% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

some believed it would be detrimental to the child. Other caretakers "resented the fact that mothers only thought about children when they were behind bars". (Henriques, 1982:110). Some mothers noted transportation difficulties, long distances, lack of public transportation and the financial burden on caretakers of transporting the children. They noted that some prisons and jails place restrictions on the ages and number of children that are allowed to visit. Other mothers reported that they themselves had discouraged or disallowed their children from visiting. They often did not want their children to see them behind bars, to go through the security procedures necessary to enter the prison, nor to see the oppressive conditions of the facility. Some worried that it would be too difficult

on their children and themselves to separate after a visit and others worried that the visits would have a negative emotional effect on their children.

In their study of inmates mothers at the New York City Correctional Institution for Women, McGowan and Blumenthal found several factors to be associated with the frequency of visitation. The first was that the younger the child, the less likely that there would be continued contact with the mother during incarceration. Also, the child's living arrangements before and after the mother's arrest appeared to affect the amount of contact between the children and their inmate mothers. Mothers who had lived with their children prior to their arrest were more likely to maintain contact with their children (71%) during incarceration than those who had not lived with their children previously (53%). Also, the frequency of contact was greatest for those children who lived with their fathers (during the mother's incarceration) followed by those who lived with grandparents, other relatives or friends and lastly by those living with foster parents.

Stanton reported a statistically significant difference in the frequency of children's visits for different offense groups. Mothers who had been incarcerated for violent offenses had received more frequent visits compared to mothers who had been incarcerated for either property or narcotics offenses. An associated variable, length of sentence, was also found to be statistically significant. Mothers who had received sentences of a year or longer had received much more frequent visits than women with shorter sentences. It appears that families who were to be reunited soon had scheduled no or very few visits since they were to see their children soon anyway.

In their study of children of incarcerated parents, Sack, Seidler and Thomas found that in all cases where children did visit, both the parents and the children had reported positive visits. Inmates had discussed how they looked forward to their children's visits. Wives of the male prisoners believed the visits made the

children happy and often fulfilled their need to see their father. Children looked forward to visits, despite being sad when it was time to depart. The researchers reported that the children had appeared to take the atmosphere of the prison for granted. As they put it, "the most important element of the visits seemed to be the resumption of actual contact with the parent, regardless of location or circumstances". (Sack, et al., 1976: 622)

Stanton believes that a "mother's attitude toward visitation is extremely important in establishing a favorable atmosphere. A mother who seeks to reassure her child of her well-being and her continued concern for the child will quite likely promote a beneficial effect for the child. A visit with a mother who expresses self-interest and self-pity could be unnecessarily stressful for a young child. Mothers tend to have mixed motives for wanting visits, and it is difficult to predict the impact of any given visit on an individual child "(Stanton, 1980: 165). In addition to the attitudes of the inmate mothers, the attitudes of the caretakers also play a part in the success of visits. Caretakers who support visitation can facilitate the visits by easing the fears of children and encouraging them. Caretakers who are not supportive of visitation can make children feel anxious and ambivalent about visiting.

In their paper on the impact of incarceration on the family, Gamer and Gamer discussed a number of reasons why visits are important to both the child and the incarcerated parent. From the child's point of view, visits can help "reassure the child that the parent does indeed still love and care about him". Visits also "help to reduce fear and anxiety about the parent's condition". Finally, they help children come to terms with a parent who had committed a criminal offense (Gamer and Gamer, 1983:3-6). From the inmate parent's point of view, visits simply allow parents to see the children they love and to see that they are being cared for properly. Visits help to maintain family communication which is

especially important for women who expect to resume the care of their children. Also it has been found that a strong family unit is associated with lower rates of recidivism and helps inmates with their reintegration into society (Holt and Miller, 1972; Morris, 1974; Glaser, 1964).

Overall, it appears that a great number of factors, as well as, pros and cons are associated with the issue of visitation. More research is needed to determine which factors are connected with positive visits and with positive long-and short-term effects.

4. Effects on Children and Mothers

In addition to the three issues just mentioned, separation due to incarceration produces other effects on children and mothers. Some of the effects on children are similar to those experienced when parents become divorced or when a parent dies. However others are unique to the incarceration experience.

Much has been written about the effects of incarceration or other types of parental separation on the psychological and emotional well-being of children (Gamer and Schrader, 1981; Bowlby, 1969; Goldstein, Freud and Solnit, 1973; Rutter, 1979; and Wald, 1975). McGowan and Blumenthal have aptly summarized the factors and circumstances which aggravate or alleviate the extent of harm to children (1978: 63).

> "The extent to which a child is affected by separation is determined by such factors as age, personality, nature of the mother-child relationship, cause and duration of the separation, and subsequent continuity and quality of care.
>
> Although there are tremendous individual variations in children's capacity to cope with stress, the consequences of separation are likely to be more harmful when the child is young, when the mother has been the only or primary caretaker, when the separation is abrupt and unplanned, and when the child is moved to a new environment with an unknown caretaker. Other factors determining the extent of potential harm to a child include any trauma experienced at the time of the

> mother's arrest, the type of care provided by substitute caretakers, the nature of his continuing relationship with his mother, and the quality of his total life experience during the period of separation.

Children whose parents are incarcerated often react with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, sadness,-and humiliation. They often have conflicting feelings and images about their incarcerated parents. As Gamer relates:

> "Although the demographic data paints a picture of these (incarcerated) women as unstable, intermittently unavailable and perhaps uninvolved, it is important to realize that in fact the children are very attached to their parents as are the parents to them. Researchers and clinicians who have seen and interviewed these youngsters come away with the strong sense that these children love and need their parents and worry about them a great deal" (Gamer, 1984: 5).

Sack, Seidler and Thomas noted that because incarceration is often "shrouded in secrecy", children are forced to deal with their conflicts and stress alone. The emotional difficulties faced by children of incarcerated parents were summed up by one inmate mother they interviewed. She said, "Anybody who thinks they don't go through hell when we are in this place doesn't know children very well. They do your time with you!" (Sack, Seidler and Thomas, 1976: 623).

Researchers have also written about the more visible effects of separation on children, namely school problems and delinquency. Sack, Seidler and Thomas (1976) found that more than half of the children in their study were reported by the wives of prisoners to have problems in school such as a temporary drop in grades or aggressiveness since the parent's confinement. They even found a small number of children, aged six to eight, who developed a temporary school phobia immediately after their parent's incarceration.

Stanton (1980) also found frequent absences by close to 40% and non-attendance by 12% of the children of incarcerated mothers that she studied. Moreover, of those who attended school, half were disciplinary problems and 70% were functioning below grade level.

The study of the effects of parental incarceration on delinquency have

yielded mixed results. In their study of juvenile delinquency, Rutter and Giller (1984) concluded that of all of the parental characteristics associated with delinquency, criminality was the most striking and most consistent. Sack, Seidler and Thomas (1976) found that only six of the seventy-three children they were studying manifested anti-social behavior soon after the incarceration of their parent. Only three of the six displayed behavior that was serious and consistent. In a second study (1977), Sack found that only three of twenty-three children exhibited serious anti-social behavior. In both studies, these children were adolescent or approaching that stage and were mostly male.

Some studies have linked the emergence of anti-social behavior in children with parental separation (Gluecks, ; and McDermott, 1970). However other researchers have discovered that it is family discord, rather than actual separation from the parent that may be the crucial contributor to delinquent behavior (McCord, et al., 1962; and Rutter, 1971).

As can be seen, much has been written about the effects of parental separation on children. Less has been written about how inmate mothers are affected as a result of the separation. Gamer and Schrader (1981) related that imprisoned parents often feel helpless and powerless in their capacity to parent. Burkhart discussed the stigma of a "bad mother" often attached to incarcerated mothers, regardless of their prior child care practices. She also points out that these "mothers carry a lot of guilt and anxiety - often because of the lack of emotional security the child or children had prior to the mother's incarceration and then again during her absence" (1973: 410). McGowan and Blumenthal (1978) found that inmate mothers also worry about the quality of care their children are receiving while they are in prison. Henriques (1982) asked the inmate mothers in her study what they worried about most. She found the three biggest worries were their children's health, behavioral adaptation to their new environment and their

safety. Other worries included the loss of their maternal influence and identity and the fact that they were missing important events in their children's lives.

It is clear that more knowledge about the effects of a mother's separation on her children and herself would aid in shaping correctional policy so as to address their needs. Hopefully, the present study will contribute to the literature in this area.

## C. Reuniting Upon Release

One of the arguments for maintaining family ties and communication through visitation, is that this is necessary for a smooth family reunion once an inmate mother is released. Several researchers have queried inmate mothers about their plans for release. In McGowan and Blumenthal's national survey of incarcerated mothers, they found that over three-fourths had planned to re-establish a home for all or some of their children. Another 12% had planned to have their children remain in their placements until the mothers had time to adjust and secure employment, housing and other necessities. Zalba reported similar findings in that 34% of the mothers had planned immediate reunions with children and 27% had planned reunions after a period of adjustment.

In their local study, McGowan and Blumenthal interviewed thirty-nine women regarding their future plans for reunion with their children. While almost all of the women (92.5%) had planned to eventually reunite with their children, thirty-six percent had made plans for an immediate reunion. Plans for an immediate reunion appeared to be related to the living arrangements of children prior to the mother's incarceration and to the number of prior incarcerations the mother had. That is, 83% of the mothers who had resided with their children prior to incarceration had made immediate plans for reunion, compared to only 4% of the mothers who had

not resided previously with their children. Similarly, 61% of the mothers with no prior incarcerations had made immediate reunion plans compared to those mothers with one or two prior prison terms (33%) and those with three or more prison terms (13%). McGowan and Blumenthal also found that inmate mothers were more likely to plan immediate reunion if their children were young, if the children had been moved since arrest and if they were currently living with their fathers or grandparents (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978: 67-71).

Most of the inmate mothers in Baunach's study (88%) had also planned to live with their children upon release. Forty-nine percent had planned to do so within a month of release. Another third had planned to wait from three months to a year in order to readjust. Baunach also found that prior residence with children was related to the plans to reunite (Baunach, 1985). She found no significant relationship between race and a mothers plan to reunite, nor with years to parole eligibility and reunion plans.

Stanton was able to conduct post-release interviews with half of the inmate mothers. She found that seventy percent of the mothers had been reunited with their children approximately one month after release. These mothers were either living alone with their children (22%), with their children and the grandparents (22%), with their children and husband or male companion (11%) or with their children and others (15%). When asked about their most recent problems, financial difficulties and finding employment were at the top of the list (41%), followed by getting settled (37%) and problems with the child (4%). There were also a number of adjustments that both children and mothers had needed to make to each other. As Stanton put it, "the impact of incarceration does not end with the release of the mother from jail. The return of the mother....creates problems for mother and child, both individually and in their relationship to each other". (Stanton, 1980:115).

Overall, it appears that the majority of mothers at least plan to reunite with their children upon release. Whether the family remains intact in the distant future is, as of yet, unknown.

## D. Programs for Inmate Mothers and Their Children

Programs for incarcerated mothers and their children vary widely from state to state. Some states still place restrictions on visits by children to prisons, while others have instituted a variety of programs including visiting centers, overnight visits, counseling services and educational programs. Boudouris, in his American Correctional Association (ACA) publication entitled "Prisons and Kids: Programs for Inmate Parents", presented the results of his survey representing 57 institutions in 50 states (Boudouris, 1985). A number of other authors have also evaluated or described various programs for inmate mothers and their children (Rosenkrantz and Joshua, 1982; Eyres, 1986; Barry, 1985; Baunach, 1985; McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978; and Stanton, 1980). In this section a brief summary of the different types of programs is presented. It is by no means an exhaustive list of programs. Instead it is intended to provide the readers with a knowledge of the varied types of programs that have been developed for this population.

### 1. Prison Nurseries

A few states (such as Ohio, North Carolina and Pennsylvania) allow newborns to reside in the correctional institution hospitals for short periods of time until other child care arrangements can be made. Both California and Florida have had statutes mandating that the state make provisions for incarcerated women to care for their newborns in the institution for some period of time, but those statutes

have been rescinded in both states.

Currently only one state, New York, runs a prison nursery on the grounds of the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women. The nursery, which was opened simultaneously with the institution itself, is located on the top floor of a building. Women move into a wing next to the nursery during the last few months of their pregnancy, where they can remain for up to a year once the child is born.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons developed a nursery program outside of the prison walls in 1978. Shared Beginnings, a joint venture between the Bureau and the Emergency Shelter Program in Hayward, California, allows eligible federal prisoners to move into a house in their seventh month of pregnancy and remain there with their newborns for up to an additional four months.

2. Children's Visiting Centers

In his survey of female correctional facilities, Boudouris found that 40% had some type of children's visiting room or center. Most of these rooms are play areas where children and their parents can spend quality time engaged in a number of activities. In addition to providing an area that is both comfortable and recreational for the children, they allow the regular visiting room to cater to visits between adults. Many of the centers, like the one at Bedford Hills, have a Sesame Street or similar type of theme.

The Iowa Women's Reformatory has a visitation program designed for pre-schoolers. It also provides funding for the transportation of children to the facility for visits. Similarly, the New Jersey Correctional Institute for Women has a federally funded program which ensures that children will have the transportation for at least one visit per month.

Two federal facilities maintain child centers as part of their overall program

for inmate parents and children. Prison MATCH was established in 1978 at the Pleasanton Federal Correctional Institution (F.C.I.) in Pleasanton, California. Prison P.A.C.T. (Parents and Children Together) was opened more recently at F.C.I. at Fort Worth in Texas. Both facilities are co-correctional and both programs are operated by non-profit organizations which administer and staff these programs within the institutions. In addition to the visiting center, both programs offer some type of educational and social service components.

3. Overnight Visits and Community Facilities

According to Boudouris, 37% of the female correctional facilities surveyed allowed children to visit overnight with their incarcerated mothers. Several other state facilities had plans underway for overnight visiting programs.

A number of overnight visiting programs in states such as Arkansas, South Dakota, New Mexico and Kentucky have been modeled after the M.O.L.D. (Mother Offspring Life Development) program at the Nebraska Center for Women at York. This program allows a maximum of two children to stay in their mothers' rooms for five days on a monthly basis. During these visits, the mothers are totally responsible for the activities and care of the children but are relieved of other duties. In addition to these overnight visits, the M.O.L.D. program includes nursery programs, child care classes, counseling and evaluation.

The Minnesota Correctional Institution for Women operates a federally funded program called Second Chance. The components of this program include weekend visits, an annual "Children's Week", as well as weekly seminars, discussion groups, counseling, family assistance and child care training in a community Head Start program located at the institution.

The parenting program at the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women

began as ten full-day visits by children annually. In 1983, an overnight component was added so that ten women and ten children could visit overnight, in the chapel, with help from five additional inmates. To be eligible, women must have been a resident for at least thirty days and must complete parenting classes.

The New Jersery Correctional Institute for Women operates weekend camp retreats for inmate mothers and their children. These retreats, funded by a number of sources including Title XX, the Salvation Army and the United Way, provide a behavior modification program aimed at developing a better relationship between the mothers and their children.

In addition, Boudouris found that five states had community facilities where some amount of overnight visiting between inmate mothers and their children is allowed. In 1979 the Community Prisoner Mother-Infant Care progam was created by statute in California. Broadened by a 1981 amendment, the program places inmate mothers and their children in halfway house facilities. A similar alternative to incarceration exists in Santa Clara County, California. The Women's Residential Center, which houses mothers and children in apartments, is an alternative to the county jail.

4. Other Services and Programs

In addition to the programs already mentioned, female correctional institutions rely on other types of programs or services to help maintain and foster relationships between inmate mothers and their children. Boudouris reported that 81% of the surveyed facilities had furlough programs at some stage of incarceration. Additionally, 96% of the facilities offered some type of parenting classes for inmate mothers. For example, both the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women and the Ohio Reformatory for Women offer child

development classes. The Prison MATCH program offers educational development for inmate mothers who can work toward a Child Development Associate degree. The Purdy Treatment Center in Washington state runs a full three-month child development course that covers topics on intellectual growth, child development, health and safety and sex education. In addition to classroom instruction, residents work with children in day care centers outside the institution and in a nursery school within the institution for children in the community.

Purdy has also set up a system whereby inmate mothers participate in the selection of foster homes for their children, located close to the institution. Children are encouraged to visit their mothers' living quarters at the institution. In return, mothers are also permitted to visit the foster homes.

As mentioned previously, programs such as Prison MATCH, Prison PACT, M.O.L.D. and Second Chance, integrate an array of education, liaison and advocacy services with either children's visiting centers or overnight visiting programs. The Oregon Women's Correctional Center operates an integrated family services project which is staffed by a social worker, a vocational rehabilitation counselor and a correctional counselor. Bedford Hills operates a Family Service Project where the counselor also serves as liaison and advocate in her attempt to help maintain the parent-child relationship in every possible way.

Since transportation is one of the main obstacles to visiting, several facilities have initiated programs that provide either the funding for or the volunteers to provide transportation. Volunteers are also utilized as family advocates in other states. Some facilities have instituted regular discussion groups for mothers, while others have initiated such services as legal advocacy, individual counseling, Parents Anonymous and other self-help groups.

## III. DESCRIPTION OF DOC PROGRAMS FOR INCARCERATED MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN

After having described existing programs for inmate mothers and their children in other states, a description of existing programs in the Massachusetts Department of Correction is in order. This chapter contains two sections: one, a brief description of the programs at each of the DOC facilities housing women and the other, a complete description of the Visiting Cottage Program, opened first at Lancaster.

### A. Programs in All DOC Facilities Housing Women

#### 1. MCI-Framingham

The bulk of the programs targeted for incarcerated mothers and their children can be found at MCI-Framingham, a medium security facility for women. MCI-Framingham (hereafter referred to as Framingham) has the care and custody of all female state inmates coming into the system, as well as those who have house of correction or county sentences. In addition, some New England states, lacking facilities of their own, send their female inmates to Framingham to serve part or all of their sentence. On January 1, 1986 Framingham, located in the town west of Boston for which it is named, had a population of 238 incarcerated women.

All parenting and family programs are operated under the umbrella of Family Services. The Family Services Coordinator is responsible for the operation of all volunteers and contractual staff offering parenting, family and related programs.

Children may visit with their mothers during regular visiting hours at

Framingham, which vary depending on each woman's assigned slot of time. In addition to the main visiting room, there are two other locations where visits between mothers and children may take place. The Parenting Center is a place specifically designed for inmate mothers and their children where they may share some private time together. Mothers must make an appointment with the Family Services Coordinator to use the Parenting Center and appointments are on a first come, first serve basis. Visits range from a few hours to a full day. The Parenting Center has "a warm and supportive atmosphere. It is designed with an area for quiet conversation, and an area for play. Included in the center is a refrigerator with snacks, a library for all ages, an arts and crafts section, and a variety of toys" (MCI-Framingham, 1986). Children can visit their mothers in the Parenting Center at any time, as long as it is cleared by the Family Services Coordinator. Thus children who do not have transportation during their mother's scheduled visiting hours, are still able to visit at their convenience. Although this is a private space for one family at a time, a mother may choose to share the room with one other mother and her children.

The Children's Visiting Area, on the other hand, can accomodate a much larger number of children. This large, sunny room, adjacent to the main visiting area, was recently re-designed and decorated with the help of the Boston Children's Museum staff. It is equipped with toys, a climbing castle and arts and crafts for all ages. In addition to providing separate space where children can play and spend quality time with their mothers, these areas also serve the entire population by making the adult visiting area an easier place to listen and talk.

There are also a number of DOC-run programs and services offered for inmate mothers, families and children. The Reading Is Fundamental Program (RIF) allows the children of inmates to select and take home quality children's books. There are also Parent/Child Activity Days and Family Days scheduled throughout

the year. These special days are held during various holidays and at other times of the year and include all types of activities for mothers, children and families. Services are also available to expectant mothers.

The Family Services Coordinator works with each expectant mother to ensure that her needs, including diet, clothing, and caretaking arrangements, are met and refers her to the Women's Health and Learning Center for pre-natal classes. A child development specialist conducts workshops on issues pertinent to child health and development. The topics include educational and day-care services, as well as financial and nutritional supplements such as WIC, AFDC, Food Stamps and General Relief. Assistance in procuring these services is also available.

A number of outside agencies also offer programs for female offenders and their children. Aid to Incarcerated Mothers (A.I.M.), a voluntary privately-funded, non-profit agency, was started in 1979 in response to the needs of women inmates to see their children regularly and to receive support with child custody cases. The purpose of A.I.M. is to reunite families, to reduce the isolation and separation between incarcerated women and their children and to assist these women in making a positive re-entry into family life. According to A.I.M.'s director, the staff and fifty A.I.M. volunteers provide friendship and advocacy to incarcerated mothers through a number of services. Probably the most popular service A.I.M. provides is transportation for the children of inmates. The A.I.M. van drives sixteen to twenty children from Boston to Framingham weekly. A.I.M. also links volunteers with mothers on a one-to-one basis to provide transportation as well as support and advocacy. It also works with staff from Hampden County to bring children twice per month to visit their mothers. Legal advocacy for mothers who have custody, adoption and visitation cases/issues pending, is also available through A.I.M.. In addition to advising mothers on these issues, they have developed a lawyer's network should legal counsel be required and A.I.M. staff will accompany

the mother to court. When the Department of Social Services (DSS) has custody of a child, A.I.M. will work with DSS to set up appropriate service plans. The other ways this agency helps families include emergency assistance to children, counseling for mothers, recreation and support activities for children and assistance with housing for inmates about to be released. Finally, A.I.M. tries to sensitize the public to the needs of incarcerated mothers and their children, lobbies to make the system more responsive to needs and provides technical assistance to other states who are trying to set up similar programs.

The Women's Health and Learning Center (WHLC), founded in 1982, is a private, non-profit organization funded by the Women's Health Unit of the Department of Public Health (DPH) and various private foundations. In addition to advocating for and educating the public and private sectors about incarcerated women, the WHLC offers a variety of services to women in the prison system. Through these services, they strive to increase the knowledge of inmates on a number of issues (health, child growth and development, substance abuse, family violence and available services). For expectant mothers, pre- and post-natal classes are held weekly on topics including nutrition, labor coaching and exercise. They are facilitated by a certified mid-wife who also acts as a labor coach for the mother. Two additional labor coaches are available if needed. Incarcerated mothers can participate in a ten-week workshop, run continuously since 1982, called "Mothering at a Distance". The seminar is taught by two educators who use role-playing, experiential learning and other devices to teach women about positive parenting, child and infant growth and care, and other relevant issues. There are other services targeted to the whole population, and not just mothers. These include seminars, workshops, counseling and support in such areas as substance abuse and addiction, women's health, children's health, family violence, multi-cultural needs and issues relating to release. The WHLC is also presently working

on a research project with Brandeis University on the life events of women in prison and their effect on substance abuse.

2. Hodder House

Hodder House is a 35-bed minimum security and pre-release facility adjacent to MCI-Framingham. Opened in December 1985, it has a very liberal visiting policy allowing visits from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week. Additionally, it will be opening a Visiting Cottage trailer of its own sometime during 1987. It is anticipated that the staff person hired to coordinate overnight visits will also develop other services for residents who are mothers, including parenting workshops.

3. MCI-Lancaster

MCI-Lancaster is a minimum security and pre-release, co-correctional facility located in Central Massachusetts. On January 1, 1986, Lancaster had a female population of 29 and a male population of 101 residents. In addition to the extended visits that are available through the Visiting Cottage Program, children may visit their mothers during regular visiting hours between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m., seven days a week. A.I.M. provides some transportation for children to Lancaster through individual volunteers and the A.I.M. van, which transports children to Lancaster at least monthly. Additionally, several workshops and seminars are offered throughout the year. Nutrition classes have been offered by the Women's Health and Learning Center and by a federal program, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. The WHLC has also run workships and seminars on women's health issues, first aid certification and parenting issues.

4. Charlotte House

Charlotte House is a pre-release facility, located in Boston, that contracts with the DOC to provide 15 beds for women eligible for pre-release status. Charlotte House was the first Massachusetts facility to allow children to stay overnight with their mothers. The Children's Overnight Policy allows children to stay overnight in their mothers' room on Friday and Saturdays nights. There is a limit of two children per mother and eight children overall during any weekend. The director also runs a parenting group on most Tuesdays, often bringing in guest speakers and outside consultants. Children are also allowed to visit during regular visiting hours which are 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. four week days and 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

5. Brooke House

Brooke House, operated by Massachusetts Halfway Houses Incorporated (M.H.H.I.) in Boston, also contracts with the DOC to provide housing for male and female inmates who are eligible for pre-release status. While there is no formal policy at Brooke House concerning visitation by children, informally children are allowed to stay overnight with their mothers when requested. Additionally they can visit during regular visiting hours which are 10 a.m. to midnight daily, except for Mondays when they are 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

## B. The Lancaster Visiting Cottage Program

The Lancaster Visiting Cottage Program was opened in January, 1985 at MCI-Lancaster, a minimum security and pre-release co-correctional facility. It was

conceived of by Paul Dickhaut, the Superintendent of Lancaster and a Planning Board was formed to bring the idea to reality. Since a program involving children would necessarily open up several custody and caretaking issues, a number of agencies and community groups were invited to join the Planning Board. These included the state Departments of Mental Health, Public Health and Social Services, the Office for Children, and two advocacy/community groups: the Women's Health and Learning Center and Aid to Incarcerated Mothers. The Department of Correction had representatives on the Planning Board from MCI-Lancaster, MCI-Framingham and the Central Office. The Visiting Cottage Planning Board began to meet and develop plans for the program in November 1983. Since the program was perceived as somewhat risky and complicated, care was taken to address and plan for as many problems, needs and issues as were conceivable. Therefore classification and selection criteria, as well as security and implementation issues were all addressed by the Board. One of the many tasks of the Planning Board was to write the program's goal and objectives. These are listed below.

**Goal:** In recognition of the family trauma that results from a mother's incarceration, our goal is to establish an interagency program which responds to the needs of incarcerated mothers and their children in a positive supportive and nurturant manner.

**Objectives:**

1. To temper the family trauma resulting from incarceration by providing an individual housing unit where mothers may have quality visiting time in a less stressful, more natural setting.
2. To assist incarcerated mothers and their children in dealing with separation issues.
3. To maintain a mother's involvement with her children.
4. To prepare mothers to resume care of their children.
5. To implement a true interagency model for providing service delivery for mothers and children.

6. To respond to the needs of incarcerated mothers and their children in a positive, supportive and nurturant manner.

It should also be noted at this time that an advisory group of incarcerated mothers at Lancaster met regularly with one of the Planning Board members. They made suggestions and reviewed policies as they were generated by the Board. Their input, which was reported back to the Board, proved to be valuable in many ways. The Planning Board gained several insights about these mothers and their children and the incarcerated mothers became invested in the program before it even began.

The program start-up date was delayed several times due to problems with the utility back-up for the trailers. Many mothers had been screened and approved for participation before the actual start-up. Thus with the careful planning and delays, the program was more than ready for its first visit. The initial extended visits went smoothly. There were no last minute crises or preparations.

The Visiting Cottage Program at Lancaster is staffed by a full-time Program Coordinator and a part-time Family Therapist. The regular correctional counselor staff provide for any other necessary coverage for the program.

Incarcerated mothers, who have visitation rights, and are suitable for transfer to Lancaster are considered eligible to participate in the Visiting Cottage Program. Suitability to transfer to a minimum security facility such as Lancaster is dependent on such factors as institutional adjustment, pending legal cases and time to parole eligibility or expiration of sentence. Interested inmates may request future participation in the program at any time during their stay at Framingham or upon their arrival at Lancaster.

Once at Lancaster, each applicant must complete a screening conducted by the Visiting Cottage Program Coordinator. This screening process includes a lengthy interview with the mother and contacts with her children's caretaker and

any agencies involved with the family. The Program Coordinator then makes a recommendation as to whether or not the resident should participate and this recommendation is reviewed by the Superintendent who has the final say. The factors considered in determining participation include: recommendations from agencies involved with the family, the well-being of each child, compliance with prior classification recommendations, and favorable institutional adjustment such as positive work and housing evaluations and a lack of recent escapes and major disciplinary reports. Applicants who have a history of major mental illness or violent behavior may be required to undergo an updated mental health evaluation prior to acceptance into the program.

If an inmate is denied participation, the reasons for the denial are discussed with her along with suggestions for possible change. All recommendations and denials for participation are reviewed at subsequent intervals.

Once the applicant is accepted into the program, she meets with the Family Therapist to discuss any issues either might have. The first visit is then scheduled, taking into consideration transportation opportunities and trailer availability. While most first visits have been overnight/weekend visits, some mothers have had day-only visits to start with. There are no limits on the number or length of visits a participant can have, but care is taken that each mother receives her fair share of visits. A few days before the visit, the inmate mother plans a menu for her visit. The Program Coordinator checks the menu for appropriateness and determines which items are available from the facility's kitchen and which must be purchased with the $15.00 meal allowance per visit. Initially, the mothers accompanied the Program Coordinator to the grocery store but this proved to be too time-consuming and complicated. The visits take place in one of the program's three-bedroom trailers equipped with a full kitchen, living room and bathroom. For the first year and a half, Lancaster had three trailers for the program, however one

has been relocated to Hodder House, so that inmate mothers there can take part in the Visiting Cottage Program.

When the children arrive for the visit, one of the program staff will accompany the mother and children to the trailer to help set up and to ensure that everything and everyone is set for the visit. During the visit, the mother is responsible for the supervision and care of her children. She is also responsible for meal preparation and the cleanliness of the trailer units. Program staff usually visit the family in the trailer during the weekend to determine how the visit is proceeding and to provide help and support as needed. The family therapist often spends some time during the visit talking and playing games with the children either in the trailer or in the program office. At night, female correctional counselors do one or two security checks on each of the trailers in use. Finally program staff are present at the end of each visit to ensure that children are transported home safely, to learn about the visit from the children and the mother and to help with any issues that may arise.

## IV. PROGRAM MONITORING

This chapter briefly reviews the research methods used in this research and presents the results of the program monitoring conducted during the program's first year of existence. The first section explains the research methodology. The second section documents the extent of participation and usage of the program. The third section describes the female inmates who applied for participation in the program that first year. It also compares them with the general DOC female population.

### A. Research Methods

As mentioned, the objectives of the evaluation were to provide feedback to the program's Advisory Board, monitor the first year of the program to obtain statistics and a description of its implementation and participants, and gather information on perceptions of program impact. It was decided that an outcome evaluation would have been premature for this initial study since the program was in its early stages with possible changes and an unknown number of participants.

A number of monitoring devices were developed by the researcher and Program Coordinator. These included an initial intake form, a visit log and individual visit sheets. The intake, which is completed by the Program Coordinator, involves a lengthy interview with the resident applying for participation and contacts with the children's caretaker and agencies involved with the family. The visit log is a chronological record of the visits as they take place, noting the participant's name, the sex and age of the children visiting, the date, and the means of transportation for the children. The visit sheets are maintained

in each women's program folder and cover various aspects of each visit. The Program Coordinator was responsible for filling out the visit sheets, but often the Family Therapist also attached comments about the visit. Having these two devices allow the overall visitation to be monitored as well as each participant's individual record of visitation. All three devices are being continued despite the end of data collection because they have provided valuable information to program staff.

Interviews were conducted with the residents, the caretakers of the children, and Lancaster staff. The residents were interviewed by the researcher after their first visit and again before they were released from Lancaster. The caretakers were interviewed by the Program Coordinator before and after the first visit. In addition, background information was extracted from the Departmental computerized data-base and included demographic, present offense and criminal history data. Finally, other information concerning program participation was collected from individual inmate and program folders.

## B. Program Usage

During 1985 Lancaster had in its care and custody 79 female residents of which 66 (84%) were mothers. Forty of these mothers (61%) sought participation in the Visiting Cottage Program. Although some of the reasons for non-participation remain unknown, at least four women had lost custody and visitation rights, three had children living outside of New England, and eight residents had adult children and chose not to have visits.

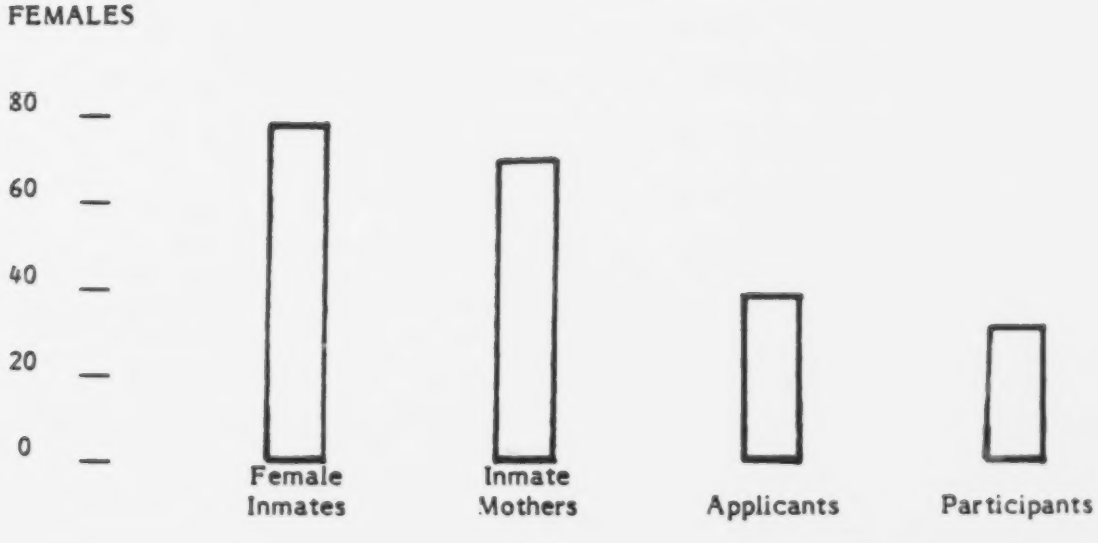
Four of the 40 women who sought participation would have been recommended to have visits but their children's caretakers or DSS, who had legal custody, would not allow visitation. These mothers were referred for legal

advocacy.

Of the 36 women who were recommended for participation, 30 had visits during 1985. Of those who did not, two were returned to MCI-Framingham, one was released to the street, two gained furlough and work release opportunities and decided against visits and one mother did not comply with the Department of Social Services' conditions for an extended visit. Overall, DSS had to make recommendations about visitation for at least some of the children of fifteen applicants. Extended visits were denied by DSS for some children in four cases. Extended visits were allowed by DSS for children in eleven cases, three of which were dependent on meeting certain conditions. Most often these conditions involved initial supervised visits or day only visits. It should be noted that no incarcerated mothers were denied participation in the program by the staff of Lancaster or by other DOC staff.

**Table 4**

**Female Residents, Applicants and Participants**



Thus 30 women (38% of all Lancaster female residents) participated in extended visits with 51 of their children. Not all of the children of these women had extended visits. Five mothers were not allowed to have visits from some of their children due to various custody and caretaking issues. Other children, most in their teens or older, elected not to visit their mothers overnight for a variety of reasons. Most of these children had regular visits with their mothers. Of the 51 children who did participate, 23 were girls (45%) and 28 were boys (55%). They ranged in age from five months to seventeen years, the average age being eight years old.

These 30 mothers and 51 children participated in 111 visits over the course of the year. Six thousand, two hundred and eighty extended visiting hours were logged in during 1985. This comes to an average of 43 hours per trailer, per week. Most visits occurred on the weekend, beginning Friday and ending Sunday. There were six day only visits and eight extended visits that lasted six or seven nights. The average number of overnights per visit was two.

The number of extended visits each incarcerated mother had with her children ranged from one to twelve during the year. The average number was 3.7 visits. If one controls for the time between the first visit and either her release from the facility or the end of the year, the average mother had a visit every 42 days; the median was every 24 days. The extent to which these inmate mothers chose to participate in the program is discussed in detail in Chapter VII.

Including the mothers, the average visit involved 2.4 persons. Sixty-eight percent of the visits were with a single child. Most of the remaining visits involved two or three children. Only a couple of visits involved four children at a time.

Transportation of the children to the facility was provided by a number of sources. Because some of the visits had different sources of transportation for the arrival and return trips, each of these was counted as a separate trip. Forty-seven

Table 5

Number of Extended Visits Applicants Had in Trailer

| | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| None | 8 | (21) |
| One | 7 | (18) |
| Two to Four | 12 | (32) |
| Five to Seven | 9 | (24) |
| Eight or More | 2 | (5) |

percent of the trips were provided by either family members or friends of the inmate mother. Another 38% of the trips were provided by volunteers, most often by A.I.M. volunteers or the A.I.M. van. However some children from Western Massachusetts were transported by volunteers from the Springfield Criminal Justice Resource Center. Foster families and DSS each provided transportation for 4% of the trips. Finally, Lancaster staff provided transportation for 8% of the trips. While relying on DOC staff to provide transportation was discouraged, staff were determined not to cancel a visit due solely to transportation. Two mothers had visits from their children who lived out of state.

## C. Description of The Visiting Cottage Program Applicants

This section will contain a description of the women (and their children) who showed an interest in participation in the Visiting Cottage Program during 1985. As mentioned previously, 40 women applied for participation. Of these, two did not have visits in 1985 but did have visits in 1986 and were thus excluded from this analysis.

Initially the social and family background, criminal history and present offense data of these 38 women are described. Next this group of women are

compared to all those women committed to the DOC in 1985 to see how they might differ.

While some of the tables generated for this information will be contained in the text, tables with additional information can be found in the Appendix.

1. Social and Family Background

Over half of the residents (22) showing interest in the program were white. Eleven were black and five were Hispanic. More than half were single (20), with seven being married, ten either divorced or separated and one being widowed. Their ages ranged from 19 to 44 years on January 1, 1985, their mean age on that day being 28 years old.

Prior to their incarceration, all but one resident lived in Massachusetts, with most living in the Springfield (12), Boston (9), or Worcester (7) area. While prior employment was unknown for most of these women, the others worked in either manual or service positions. The average grade completed was the 11th grade with at least 18 of the women having completed high school.

Overall these mothers had 81 children, 51 of whom had extended visits. Fourteen residents had one child, ten had two children and fourteen had three or more, including one mother who had seven children. These children ranged in age from five months to 21 years of age, the average age being 9 years old. Forty-four (54%) were boys and 17 were girls (46%).

The caretaking situations of these children during their mother's incarceration is very similar to what other researchers have found. That is, the majority of children (64%) were being taken care of by their relatives. The largest group of children (43%) were in the care of one or both of their grandparents. Seven children (9%) were in the care of their father and 12% were with other

relatives. Twenty-five percent were in foster homes. The remaining children were either on their own, living with friends or in residential care. Children were separated from their siblings in twelve families. This represents half of the families where there was more than one child.

**Table 6**

**Children's Caretaker During Mothers' Incarceration (N = 81)**

| Caretaker | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Grandparents | 35 | (43) |
| Other Relatives | 10 | (12) |
| Father | 7 | (9) |
| Foster Parents | 20 | (25) |
| Other | 9 | (11) |

As for legal custody, fourteen of the children were in either the sole or joint custody of their mother even during her incarceration. The Department of Social Services retained custody of 28% of these children while the father, grandparents or other relatives had custody of the remaining children. Just under half (47%) of the children were in contact with their fathers. Forty-four percent had no contact with their fathers and four of the children's fathers were presently incarcerated. Overall, 15 of the 38 families or 40% had some involvement with DSS.

2. Criminal History

Most of the women in this study were reported as having considerable contact with the court system prior to this incarceration. Forty percent of the women

began their criminal history before age twenty. The mean age at their first court appearance was also twenty years old. Only two women had been committed to the Department of Youth Services as a juvenile. The total number of court appearances ranged from the present being their first (five women) to more than twenty court appearances (four women). The average number was eight prior court appearances. Twenty-five (66%) inmates had prior charges for person offenses and 22 (58%) had prior property charges. Similarly, 21 (55%) women had prior charges for drug offenses. Only two women had prior sex charges and six had prior alcohol charges.

Eight women (21%) had been previously incarcerated, five of whom had been imprisoned more than once. Four of these eight women had been paroled previously. One had violated her parole.

3. Present Offense and Incarceration

As for their present incarceration, we found that the average age of the women on the day of commitment was 27 years old. Twenty-five of the 38 women were in their twenties at commitment. Eleven were thirty or older and two were under the age of twenty.

The present offense is defined as the most serious offense for which a woman was incarcerated. Thus 18 women (47%) were incarcerated for person offenses and one for a sex offense. In descending order of frequency, these included: unarmed robbery, manslaughter, armed assault, murder, assault, armed robbery and rape. Eight women were incarcerated for property offenses including larceny, burglary and arson. Eight other women were incarcerated for possession of a controlled substance and three were committed for other offenses, such as prostitution.

Table 7

Present Offense

| Offense | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Person | 18 | (47) |
| Property | 8 | (21) |
| Drug | 8 | (21) |
| Sex | 1 | (3) |
| Other | 3 | (8) |

The maximum sentence imposed on these women ranged from less than one year to life. Fourteen women had maximum sentences of ten to twenty-four years. The median maximum sentence was eight years; the average maximum sentence was fourteen years.

To get an idea of whether these Visiting Cottage applicants were long- or short-term inmates, two different calculations were made. First we calculated the time between their date of commitment and January 1, 1985 (the beginning of the program) to find out how long they have been incarcerated. Ten women were committed after that date and therefore had only been incarcerated a few months before they were transferred to Lancaster and participated in the program. Of the remaining 28 residents, half had been incarcerated for eight months or less and the other half had been incarcerated for 20 months to 14 years. The median number of months already incarcerated was 19 months. Another calculation made was the time to parole eligibility (P.E.). Five women did not have a P.E. date and one woman's P.E. date had passed. Of the 32 women who had P.E. dates in the future, 18 women looked forward to a possible release in a year, 8 women had between one and two years before their P.E. dates, and 6 had P.E. dates after two years including those whose P.E. dates were more than eight years away. The median

number of months to possible parole was 11.5 months. These figures suggest that there are two distinct groups - one whose offenses are property/drug-related and who are serving shorter sentences and another group whose offenses are serious person offenses warranting a much longer period of incarceration.

While a small number of women had multiple moves between Framingham, Lancaster, parole and other DOC facilities, most of the women experienced a single move from Framingham to Lancaster. An examination of the time spent at Framingham just prior to the current move to Lancaster reveals that just under one-third of the women (32%) had spent two or more years at Framingham before transferring to Lancaster. A couple of women had been in Framingham for one to two years. The remaining women spent less than a year at Framingham, 38% spending less than six months.

Eight of the inmate mothers who eventually had trailer visits were already at Lancaster when the Visiting Cottage Program began. Of the 22 who were not at Lancaster when the program began, sixteen participated in their first extended visit within one month of arriving at Lancaster. The remaining six women had their first visit within two months of their arrival. The average number of days until the first visit was twenty-eight.

At the intake, the Program Coordinator determined each applicant's substance abuse history through the interview and a review of her record. Almost half of the applicants (47%) admitted to prior drug use and another 10% admitted to alcohol problems or problems with both. Most of these women were very candid about their drug histories, often relating how costly their heroin or cocaine habit had become prior to their incarceration.

By the end of the one year evaluation period, two-thirds of the women had been released from Lancaster. Five women were returned to MCI-Framingham - four for disciplinary reasons and one due to a miscalculation in sentence. One

woman moved on to a pre-release facility in Boston. The remaining twenty women were released to the street - one by the court, six by a good conduct discharge and thirteen by parole. While over two-thirds of the women (71%) were classified at the minimum security level when they first sought participation in the program, almost all of the residents released to the street had achieved the pre-release level. Over two-thirds of the released women had spent six months or less at Lancaster. The average number of months spent at Lancaster was seven.

Of the sixteen mothers who were interviewed prior to release, seven planned to join their children at their grandmother's house. Two planned to move in with another relative who were also caretakers of their children. Two women had plans to move in with a friend, one taking her children with her immediately, another waiting a month before having one of her two children move in with her. Five women planned to move out on their own immediately upon release, with two of these women planning to take their children with them.

Overall, twelve mothers planned to be immediately united with their children, however only four planned to be sole caretakers from the beginning. The other eight wanted to get settled, find jobs, and save money before attempting to move out on their own with their children. Four women were not planning to live with their children upon release. They wanted to wait a month or two to get settled, before taking on that responsibility. Finally, there were three participants who had different plans for different children. All three of these women had relinquished part of their child care responsibilities to either a relative or DSS before their incarceration. All three planned to reunite with one child in a short period of time and work towards reuniting with the other(s) in the future.

The final variable relating to incarceration is number of furloughs. Half of the women who sought participation in the Visiting Cottage Program had received prior furloughs. Of the nineteen women who received furloughs, thirteen had ten

or less, three had between eleven and twenty furloughs and three women had experienced more than twenty furloughs. Only one woman had been declared an escape while on furlough, the others all being successful.

4. Comparison With Female DOC Population

The 38 women studied in this evaluation were compared to all of the women committed to the DOC in 1985. Since the turnover rate at Lancaster and in the general population of females is high, it was decided to use the yearly commitments for comparison, rather than a profile of the population on any given date. Although family and present incarceration data were unavailable for the commitment population, the two groups were compared along most of the social background, criminal history and present offense variables discussed previously. The comparisons were achieved by dichotomizing most of the variables and applying the chi square statistic.[5] For interval level variables, the variable was dichotomized at the mean.

The results of the comparison are presented in Table 8. As can be seen, the chi square value was not significant and therefore the two populations did not differ on any of the social background variables. Prior address was not tested since there were too many categories, which would have made the chi square analysis invalid. However a visual comparison of this variable reveals that the Lancaster Visiting Cottage women were more apt to have lived in either Hampden or Berkshire counties than the 1985 female commitments. This makes sense because women who are from the western part of the state are often transferred to Lancaster and remain there for pre-release due to its proximity to their homes.

Table 8

Comparison of 1985 Commitment and Visiting Cottage Program Population

| | Chi Square Value | Difference Significant at: |
|---|---|---|
| **Social Background** | | |
| Race | 1.1 | N.S.* |
| Marital Status | 3.6 | N.S. |
| Last Grade Completed | 2.4 | N.S. |
| Drug Use | 2.0 | N.S. |
| **Criminal History** | | |
| Number of Court Appearances | 6.3 | .05 |
| Number of Person Offenses | 3.2 | .10 |
| Number of Property Offenses | 1.2 | N.S. |
| Number of Sex Offenses | 1.4 | N.S. |
| Number of Drug Offenses | 0.1 | N.S. |
| Number of Alcohol Offenses | 0.7 | N.S. |
| Number of Escape Offenses | 0.1 | N.S. |
| Prior D.Y.S. Commitment | 1.2 | N.S. |
| Prior Adult Incarcerations | 3.0 | N.S. |
| Age at First Court Appearance | 0.5 | N.S. |
| **Present Offense** | | |
| Present Offense | 144.4 | .01 |
| Sentence Type | 12.0 | .01 |
| Minimum Sentence | 119.0 | .01 |
| Maximum Sentence | 127.4 | .01 |
| Time Until Parole Eligibility | 44.1 | .01 |
| Age at Incarceration | 0.04 | N.S. |

*N.S. means that the chi square was not significant and that there is no statistical difference between the two populations for that variable.

1985 Commitments: N=799 Visiting Cottage Program: N=38

As for the criminal history variables, no differences were found between the two populations for number of prior property, sex, drug, alcohol or escape offenses, nor for prior D.Y.S. commitment, number of prior adult incarcerations or age at first court appearance. There was a statistically significant difference between the two populations for two variables - number of court appearances and number of charges for person offenses. The women in the Visiting Cottage Program were more likely to have eight or less prior court appearances (70%) than the 1985 female commitments (49%) who had appeared in court more. Although appearing in court slightly less often, the Visiting Cottage women were more apt to have appeared in court at some time for person offenses (66%) than the 1985 female commitments (46%).

There were statistically significant differences between the two populations for all of the present offense variables, excluding age at incarceration. Visiting Cottage women were more apt to have a person or sex offense as their present offense (50%), than the 1985 female commitments (11%). It is no surprise then that three other variables related to present offense (minimum sentence, maximum sentence and time until parole eligibility) also proved to be statistically significant. A greater number of the 1985 commitments (97%) received indeterminate sentences than did Visiting Cottage women (55%). Looking at the maximum sentence, 45% of the Visiting Cottage women had eleven years or more, while only 2% of the 1985 commitments had a similar maximum sentence. There were three (of 38) Visiting Cottage women sentenced to life, in comparison to one (of 799) 1985 female commitment. Finally the time between date of commitment and date of parole eligibility was compared[6]. Ninety-two percent of the 1985 commitments had a year or less from commitment to the time they became eligible for parole. However only 52% of the Visiting Cottage women had a year or less till their P.E. date.

Overall it appears that the women studied as part of the Visiting Cottage Program evaluation were not different with regard to their social background from the 1985 female commitments. Their criminal histories were also similar, except that the Visiting Cottage women appeared in court less often but were more likely to have been charged with prior person offenses. As to their present offense, the Visiting Cottage women were more likely to be presently incarcerated for a person or sex offense. Related to that, their sentence was more likely to be longer and they would serve more time before they were eligible for parole, than the 1985 female commitments. This difference in offense and therefore length of sentence raises questions about both the possible differences in short- and long-term inmate mothers and also the possible differences in their and their children's issues and needs. These questions are addressed in a section comparing long-term and short-term inmate mothers.

## V. SEPARATION ISSUES

In addition to requesting an evaluation of the Visiting Cottage Program, the Board wanted to learn more about the actual separation of mothers and children due to incarceration. Therefore both mothers and caretakers were interviewed. This chapter presents these findings about separation, beginning with an examination of when the separation occurred. It is important to determine whether or not it was the incarceration itself or some other prior circumstances which caused the actual separation in the VCP population. The next two sections present findings about the effects of separation on the children and the inmate mothers in this study. The final section discusses the issues of visitation and the explanation of the mother's absence to the children.

### A. Time of Separation

An examination of the actual time of separation for the women and children in this study reveals that three-fourths of the VCP applicants (74%) had been caring for all of their children prior to their incarceration. Similarly, of the 72 children who were minors and for whom prior caretaking situations were known, 75% had been cared for by their mothers prior to incarceration. This is very similar to what other researchers have found in their studies of inmate mothers. (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978; Figueria-McDonough, et al., 1981; and Glick and Neto, 1977.)

As Table 9 reveals, 57% of the children had been cared for by their mothers or both of their parents and another 10% by mothers plus other relatives, most often the grandparents. One child had been cared for by the father and five

children (6%) solely by the grandparents. Fifteen percent of the children had been living with foster parents even before their mother's incarceration. The remaining 11% had been either on their own or their caretaking arrangement was unknown.

**Table 9**

**Custody and Caretaking Arrangements of Children Prior to Mother's Incarceration (N=81)**

| | Caretaker | | Custody | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | (Percent) | Number | (Percent) |
| Mother or Both Parents | 46 | (57) | 56 | (69) |
| Mother and Relative | 8 | (10) | -- | --- |
| DSS/Foster Care | 12 | (15) | 13 | (16) |
| Child On Own or Unknown | 9 | (11) | 7 | (9) |
| Grandparent(s) | 5 | (6) | 2 | (2) |
| Father | 1 | (1) | 3 | (4) |

Sixty-nine percent of the VCP children had been in the custody of either their mothers or both of their parents prior to incarceration. Fathers had received sole custody of 4% and grandparents of 2% of the children. Most of the remaining children (16%) had been under the legal custody of the Department of Social Services.

Ten of the 38 VCP mothers (26%) had at least one child whom they had not cared for prior to their incarceration. Of these ten, nine mothers had serious problems with substance abuse. The only mother without a substance abuse history had been very young and had shifted the child care responsibilities to her own mother. Four of the nine women with a substance abuse history had lost custody of

at least one child to DSS - two due to charges of abuse and/or neglect and two due to their substance abuse. Four other women had voluntarily shifted their child care responsibility to DSS or to the children's fathers due to their multiple incarcerations and/or their substance abuse. It appears then that at least nine of the women in this study were not separated from some of their children due to incarceration but instead due to the problems caused by their serious substance abuse.

## B. The Effects of Separation On Children

During the first interview, 28 inmate mothers were questioned about the difficulties their children experienced as a result of the separation at incarceration. Caretakers were also interviewed about specific physical, emotional and behavioral effects that the separation might have had on the children. Of the twenty-seven caretakers interviewed, twenty-one (78%) had been the caretaker since the inmate mothers had been incarcerated. Three caretakers revealed that the children had been in a foster placement previously and in one case, the child had been placed in an institution due to being diagnosed as emotionally disturbed.

The effects of the separation on children observed by mothers and caretakers fell into five categories. They are: physical symptoms, emotional reactions, acting-out behaviors, problems with a caretaker and problems with school. These are all discussed below.

Caretakers reported some physical symptoms in children after their mother's incarceration. Seven (26%) mentioned that sleep disturbances had begun to occur shortly after that time. A few of the children had experienced problems with bed-wetting at night. For one child, this problem had continued, happening especially when his mother left him after furloughs. Other sleep disturbances included

nightmares, bad dreams and children waking up crying. One child had begun to fall out of bed at night and another had developed fears and was afraid of being in the dark. Several caretakers reported eating problems, stating that some children had begun to refuse to eat and that other children were fussy eaters. Other physical symptoms of separation included increased sickness (one child had developed asthma, another an ulcer), problems with toilet-training and problems with developmental skills.

Both caretakers and mothers reported emotional reactions in the children immediately after the separation and some which developed over time. Caretakers noted that some children had exhibited signs of being sad, depressed, lonely and/or angry. Seven caretakers answered positively when specifically asked if the child had withdrawn. They explained that the children had become more quiet, shy, or that they had played less and had become more serious. Only three caretakers reported that children had been difficult to handle.

Mothers reported similar changes in their children, either viewing the changes themselves at visits or learning of them through others. A couple of mothers felt that their children had been completely devastated by the separation and several reported that their children cried more often. One mother noted that her child had regressed like a baby and another that he had become so withdrawn as to appear meek and timid. A few children were sent to counseling to help them cope with their mother's incarceration. The following responses of these inmate mothers portray the effects on children as seen by their mothers.[7]

> "He's a real quiet and close-mouthed kid. I don't know what he's feeling. He would never come out and express his feelings."
>
> "She was lonely and sad and she cried a lot. She cried in school and she wakes up crying at night".
>
> "They just missed me not being there and they didn't know how to express what they were feeling. They thought I would forget them."

Such emotional reactions are common according to Gamer and Schrader (1981).

They stated that children whose parents are incarcerated often react with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, sadness, and humiliation.

When caretakers were questioned about changes in behavior over time, most reported none (56%) and some reported that the children had improved (30%). The latter reported that the children had become more out-going and less withdrawn, aggressive, sad and depressed. Four caretakers reported that once the children had been allowed to visit their mothers, they had appeared happier and less disturbed. Although acting-out behavior was less prevalent than either physical or emotional reactions, three caretakers did report instances of it. Two caretakers noted that the children they cared for often acted out after visits with their mothers. One caretaker reported that the child had, over time, begun to act out by stealing, lying and destroying household items. Several inmate mothers also reported acting-out behavior, citing stealing, fist fights and general negative behavior in their children. However, only one boy had displayed any serious delinquent activities.

Several caretakers and mothers reported that children were experiencing problems in school. A couple were reported to be acting out in school, while a few others had either been kept back or had received lower grades than usual. As one mother reported of her son, "(He), all of a sudden, didn't want to get into his school work. He used to do well. I think it's because (I'm) not there - he used to always want to show me his work".

Four mothers, in this study, reported that their children had been subjected to jeers and teasing regarding their incarceration. Given that children rarely speak of the incarceration itself, it is likely that more than these four children were experiencing this problem, but did not report it, especially to their mothers. Researchers have speculated that reluctance to attend school, the onset of fights and general acting out behavior are often the result of peer teasing.

Several mothers in this study related that their children were experiencing

some difficulty with their caretaker. A couple of children had been abused and/or neglected and had thus been removed from the caretaker. Other children had difficulty adjusting to their caretakers or simply disliked them. One mother discussed how her child had become withdrawn as a result of living with one aunt, then another, then a grandmother and finally with a third aunt. Another mother told of how her son had run away. She said, "He didn't want to go to a foster home. All the kids were sad all the time. There was nothing I could do - it drove me crazy." Eventually their maternal aunt came from out-of-state to help the grandmother take care of the children.

In addition to the five types of effects just discussed, a number of mothers expressed concern over the long-term emotional well-being of their children. When asked about her biggest worry, one inmate mother replied, "that he'll be emotionally scarred from my being incarcerated." Another mother pointed to the presence of emotional problems in her son already, "when I'm with him, I can't leave the room without him following me. He's so afraid of losing me again". A third inmate mother conveyed how her baby wouldn't let her near her without screaming. This lasted for several visits.

Although most mothers and caretakers described the impact that separation had on the children, seven caretakers stated that the children they were caring for did not have any severe reactions or problems because they had always been cared for by the grandmothers or other extended family. One grandmother reported that the child had appeared to be relieved when the mother had been incarcerated because the mother had not been home much and the child felt safer. Additionally, three mothers could not mention any specific difficulties that their children experienced upon their incarceration. It appears then that while incarceration did affect most of the children in this study, it had less of an impact on the children who were already being cared for by someone other than their mothers.

C. The Effects of Separation on Inmate Mothers

In the current evaluation, inmate mothers were asked about the difficulties they experienced as a-result of being separated from their children. A handful of mothers discussed the general difficulties they had experienced with the overall separation, while a few others related the trauma of the actual separation. Here is a sample of the responses.

> 'Going away before the holidays was terrible. I've only seen my son for one hour in four months.'
>
> 'A lot of difficulties. Had high blood pressure, headaches. Just missing them. It was the first time I've been away from them.'
>
> 'It was just hard to be away. We had never been separated. Thank heavens I had my mother ( to care for her). That made it easier to deal with.'

In addition to the general difficulties experienced by mothers due to being separated from their children, there were other, more specific effects. They fell into three general categories, including emotional reactions, problems with caretakers and the well-being of their children, and worrying about the disintegration of the mother-child relationship.

Almost a third of the mothers mentioned feelings of guilt, frustration, anger or depression regarding their separation. They discussed their sense of complete loss and failure as mothers.

> 'I went into a depression. Thought I was going to die. She was the light of my life. I had to be put on lithium.... it took me five months to get out of it.'
>
> 'Lonely. I felt like I had abandoned her. I felt guilty. You don't see how important the time is (with kids) until you don't have it.'
>
> "Just a whole lot of guilt. Guilt is my killer. The thing of getting myself into the position I was in. Being in jail was totally against what I thought a mother should be".
>
> "I ended up with a severe disciplinary record. I reacted very strongly to being separated from him."

'Just feeling that I had lost them somewhat. When I was on drugs, I wasn't aware of not being around them. It's different when you're straight. There's a bad feeling of absence.'

As can be seen, the various emotional reactions caused mothers to behave differently. Many became severely depressed, some repressed all of their feelings and a few resorted to acting-out behavior that caused them to be considered disciplinary problems.

Problems with caretakers included the initial selection of a caretaker as well as subsequent problems that surfaced over time. Several inmate mothers discussed the difficulties they had had with finding an appropriate caretaker for their children. Women who had been incarcerated for a number of years appeared to have had more problems with the state intervening regardless of whether or not the mother had found a relative or friend to care for her child(ren). A number of women complained that they had not been allowed to give their input into the caretaking decision. A few inmate mothers noted the difficulties they had experienced when they had been separated from their babies within days of their births. However, many mothers voiced their appreciation, and often the relief they had felt, because they were able to leave their children with the grandmother or other relative. For the mothers whose children had been taken away by DSS either before or at incarceration, DSS often filed "210 petitions" for permanent adoption. Inmate mothers had either found themselves going to court to fight the petition or continuously worried that they would lose their children permanently.

'I was never consulted. It was done and then I was told. They separated my children and their father was disregarded.'

'My kids are in jeopardy of being adopted and I'm not sure what to do... I've been getting visits but I'm scared I won't get them back.'

Other problems with caretakers centered on differences in child-rearing techniques, problems with the quality of care or their children's dislike of their caretakers. Many mothers did not want their children to be brought up the way

they had been brought up. One fourth of the mothers worried that their children were not being cared for properly. A number of inmate mothers worried that something would happen to their children while they were away. When they were asked to be more specific, they usually responded with a statement like, "Anything, a car accident, abduction, abuse...". One mother reported having regular nightmares that her kids were getting hurt or hit by a car. The quotes below reflect mothers' various concerns regarding the quality of care their children are receiving.

> 'My child was born at Framingham. It was difficult getting him prepared to go to his grandparents. I had a hard time getting his grandmother to let him come up to visit me ... I had to battle with her over medical decisions.'

> 'A lot of frustration that you had no control over their lives. Missed their daily living. We were very close and to be away from them was a helpless, hopeless feeling. And they're not being brought up the way I want...'

> "Be wondering how they are - how they're doing, if they're teaching them good stuff. I did wrong, but I want good for them."

The separation caused many mothers to worry about the possibility that the mother-child relationship would disintegrate. Mothers worried that their children were fine without them, would forget them or become more attached to their current caretaker. They also worried that their children were embarassed over them, and would never obey or trust them again.

> 'That they would forget me and stop loving me.'

> "That he'll come to depend on others more than me. That's why I'm pushing so hard for visits."

> 'That they don't know me and I don't know them. I'd feel guilty having to discipline them."

It should be noted that a couple of mothers spoke positively about their initial incarceration, saying that it had forced them to stop using drugs or drinking. These

mothers had been either separated from their children prior to incarceration or felt that their children had not been receiving the proper care. One mother explained how two of her children had been taken from her due to drug use and that another had been cared for by a relative. Although she had tried to get help for her drug problem, it had not worked out. As she put it, "from the moment I was arrested, I felt I had been rescued." Another mother, also a drug user, reported feeling guilty about her incarceration but admitted, "it might have been the best thing for us -we were separated before - I was never there."

In general it appears that inmate mothers have a number of conflicting feelings and worries to deal with at the beginning and throughout their incarceration. When they were questioned about what could have been done to alleviate some of their problems, almost half did not believe there to be any solutions. However more than a third brought up ideas that would improve visiting with their children. Some wanted an overnight visiting program at Framingham, and some suggested more help with transportation for visits. A couple of inmates acknowledged that visiting conditions had improved at Framingham since their incarceration. Two mothers who had given birth to children while incarcerated called for a gradual separation at birth and improved visiting for infants.

Several women suggested that there needs to be better communication between themselves and those who make the caretaking decisions. They wanted to be given the opportunity to provide their input and to help explain the situation to their children. It was also suggested that there should be someone who could help the family get through the beginning stages - to suggest avenues for financial aid, counseling and just understanding the mother's situations. Many advocates have made similar recommendations for change.

## D. Visitation and Explanation of Mother's Absence

As was learned in the literature review, two important separation issues that must be dealt with are the explanation of mother's absence to children and visitation. In this section the ways in which these issues were handled by the VCP mothers and caretakers are discussed.

When caretakers were asked if the children knew their mother was in prison the majority (81%) answered affirmatively. In two cases, children were too young to understand and in three, they did not know. Some of the caretakers' responses were vague. One caretaker reported that even though the child visits the mother, she was unsure if he knows she is in prison. She explained that the grandmother would not tell him in order to protect him from the stigma of incarceration. However no explanation had been given to the child and he had not asked. Another caretaker assumed the child knew but said that it was not discussed. Unfortunately, the caretakers were not further questioned about when explanations had taken place or who had provided them.

Some of the VCP mothers discussed how they had initially explained their incarceration to their children. Others had initially left it to the caretakers but had since brought it up during an overnight visit. A couple of participants, whose children had been told that their mother was in a hospital, explained to their children during the initial trailer visit that they were really in prison. A few mothers expressed anger that the DSS social worker or caretaker had explained the absence and that they had not been allowed to. A few of the children were told that their mothers were in programs to obtain help with their drug problems. However, other researchers have shown that no matter how a mother's absence is explained, children usually find out that their mother is in prison.

As far as visiting, caretakers were asked if the children request to see their

mothers. Over two-thirds of the caretakers said that children do ask to visit. One caretaker related how one young child, who had been transported in the A.I.M. van to visit his mother at Framingham every Wednesday, now asks everyday if it is Wednesday yet. A few of the caretakers who responded negatively, qualified their response that even though they don't ask to visit, when told a visit is about to take place, the children are happy. One foster mother reported that the child she cared for asked to see his grandparents more often than his mother. She believed it was because they communicated with him better than his mother did. It appears that another child had to prepare himself for up-coming visits. He wanted to know about a visit ahead of time. No children regularly refused to visit their mothers, however for a small number, the anticipation of visits caused them anxiety and discomfort.

Both mothers and caretakers were asked about the frequency of children's visits to their mothers at Framingham and at Lancaster. Since their responses were similar, those of the mothers will be reported. Three mothers reported that their children had never visited them at Framingham, and three others that there had been only one such visit. Seven mothers had seen their children monthly or less often than monthly. Two mothers explained that they had received frequent visits at the beginning of their incarceration but that they had slackened off over time. The children of four mothers had visited bi-weekly. Finally ten mothers had received visits from their children either weekly or more often.

Table 10

Mothers Reported Visits From Children at MCI-Framingham

| Frequency of Visit | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Never/Just Once | 6 | (16) |
| Monthly or Less | 9 | (24) |
| Bi-Weekly | 4 | (10) |
| Weekly or More | 10 | (26) |
| Unknown | 9 | (24) |

When asked what the visits at Framingham had been like, most mothers complained that they had been short and that there had been little privacy. While some mothers mentioned positive visits in the Parenting Room, others discussed how visits in other areas had produced anxiety, discomfort and sadness due to the restrictiveness of the settings, the searches and/or the brevity of the visits. One mother related how her baby used to get all hyped up due to the noise in the visiting room. She requested the use of the Parenting Room and had found it to be much quieter, resulting in a calmer baby. The responses below are typical of the complaints made by the VCP mothers.

> "I felt stifled. There was a million kids around and officers. I couldn't talk to him. Wasn't private enough."

> "Difficult. Knowing she got searched and patted. I don't like it. They were always there staring at you all the time. No privacy. I didn't like it when she would leave and cry and I was standing behind the glass."

> "Most everybody after a visit - they're washed out, drained and sad and the kids leave crying."

Since the interviews with the mothers were conducted after the initial extended visit at Lancaster, all mothers had seen their children at least once at that facility. For nine mothers, that extended visit (usually set up within a month of arrival) was their first with their children at Lancaster. The visiting patterns of the remaining women were pretty similar to what they had been at Framingham. A few mothers reported seeing their children more often at Lancaster because the caretaker or the relative who provided the transportation preferred visits at this facility. Other mothers had slightly more or less visits depending on the proximity to the children's home. Since Lancaster is a minimum and pre-release facility without a wall, bars, pat searches, and uniformed correctional officers, it is no wonder that mothers preferred visits with their children there. They described visits with children at Lancaster as longer, more relaxed, less restrictive and more private than visits at Framingham. They described Lancaster as having more opportunities to play games with children and also as being more conducive to real conversation. The one problem that some of the mothers experienced with young children was their children's inability to understand why their mothers could not just come home with them since Lancaster did not look like a prison as Framingham had.

As mentioned earlier, several caretakers related that the children's adjustment had improved after visits with their mothers. Researchers have found that children envision many things about prison, some from television, others from their imagination. One caretaker reported that after the child she was caring for saw his mother, he was less fearful. He finally told her that he had thought that his mother had to live with worms. While this is only one example, it is indicative of what children may be dealing with and how visits may help alleviate these fears.

## VI. RELEVANT ISSUES AND FINDINGS

During the evaluation, several issues emerged. Some of these issues were directly related to the program, others were more indirect. Similarly, some were anticipated before the evaluation and others were not. This chapter explores these salient issues and findings in nine separate sections. In order to provide a backdrop for these sections, the first section presents the feedback received from staff and inmates regarding the Visiting Cottage Program's daily operation.

### A. Feedback on the Program's Daily Operation

Before presenting the major findings and issues uncovered during this evaluation, it is important to discuss the feedback received on the program's daily operation. Therefore, this section highlights the opinions, concerns and problems of the program as seen by program participants and Lancaster staff. Information for this section was gathered through inmate and staff interviews, an examination of the visit sheets and the researcher's interaction with people at the facility.

When participants were asked about how their first visits went, twenty-six of 28 women answered positively. Only two inmate mothers had mixed feelings about their first visit. All but one mother thought their initial visit had been successful and hence, wanted a second visit. Many related their relief at how well the visits had gone. A sampling of their responses demonstrates best their overall satisfaction and enthusiasm over those initial visits.

> 'Fine. Been a long time - five years since I spent a night with her. That alone was great.'
>
> "Great, but exhausting."

'Very successful. It took some of the fear I had away and I know it took a lot of fear from their not knowing. It helped everyone - gave my sister a break from taking care of them.'

'A lot of things were accomplished... positive things. Kids were unsure about me. They saw I was there for them. We stayed down at trailer as much as possible."

All of the mothers interviewed said the trailer had been in good condition and that it had been stocked with the necessary items. Several women related how it was the nicest place that they and their children had ever stayed in, referring to it as "high-class" and "beautiful".

When asked about the best part of the visit, half of the mothers felt that just being with their children overnight was best. Others felt it was the setting because it was like a home situation or because it gave them the opportunity to really talk and be alone. Several mentioned that they had the opportunity to mother their children, to do the little things for their children that they missed. A few mothers related specific instances in the visit that were particularly touching and special to them.

"Being able to give her a bath, brush her hair, pick out her clothes .... just to feel like she's mine again. Like I'm her mother."

"Strangest part was seeing each other in pajamas. I couldn't believe it. But the best part was waking up and seeing him still there."

Mothers were also questioned about the difficulties they had experienced during their first visits. Twenty reported no problems. Several mothers reported difficulties at the end of visits, when it was time for their children to leave. The other difficulties mentioned were exhaustion during the visit, testing by one child, a child who got sick, a disciplinary report received, a teenage daughter who had been approached by a male resident and the difficulty one mother had in explaining to her young child why some areas were off limits. None of these difficulties were serious, yet all were discussed with program staff either during or after the visits.

In an examination of the visit sheets, program staff noted other difficulties

during the visits. There were a handful of medical emergencies where children were brought to the hospital for medical attention. All turned out to be minor injuries or illnesses. Four visits were extended beyond the scheduled termination and one visit was put together quickly to help aid in child care due to a family emergency. Program staff often noted when the inmate participants were testing the limits of the program, or trying to manipulate the staff. Manipulation often centered around the purchase of food or the mother's need to get additional food from the facility's kitchen, which is located in one of the men's residential cottages.

One of the initial concerns of Lancaster staff was that children would be running wild through the facility and would disturb the other residents. As the Program Coordinator pointed out in her 1985 annual report, the children "have been remarkably well behaved and have not created significant management problems.... Other inmates, both male and female, have not voiced any objections to children being on grounds" (MCI-Lancaster, 1986: 5). In fact, a number of staff have even remarked that the children have had a positive effect on the facility. Another fear, child abuse, was also unfounded. There has never been any evidence or even any suspicion of child abuse during the trailer visits.

A third concern expressed by Lancaster staff when the program was being developed, was its effect on the rest of the resident population. The female residents were very supportive of the program. While some were oblivious to children visiting in general, other female residents enjoyed conversing and playing with the children. When staff were asked what kind of reputation the program had among inmates, all but two staff believed that inmates either felt positively toward it or had no thoughts about it either way. Those two staff had heard both positive and negative comments from inmates. Staff were also asked if they thought male residents resented it being offered to female residents only. Three

staff believed residents did resent it, four believed that they did not and the remaining four had heard disparate remarks. Some staff were surprised that so few men had expressed an interest in participation in the program. Before the program began, several staff had thought that male inmates would demand equal participation in the program by the end of the first year. However, this has not been the case. Only a couple of male residents have actually approached the Program Coordinator regarding program participation.

Although several of the concerns anticipated by the staff did not develop, a number of problems were pointed out by inmates and staff alike. The majority of staff and participant replies focused on four separate issues: the location of the trailers, the lack of activities for children, transportation and issues of security and safety. The latter will be discussed in a section of its own.

Initially, the trailers were to be located in an open area, adjacent to the women's cottage but apart from the remainder of the facility. Because of problems with the utility hook-ups, the trailers were moved to another area on the opposite side of the men's cottage from the women's cottage and close to the men's recreational area and field. This location has been criticized by both staff and inmates alike. Staff feel the location is too much of a temptation as it is located close to the men's cottage and necessitates that women walk past it to get back and forth from their cottage to the trailers. They also mentioned that the remoteness of the trailers causes difficulties in program monitoring. Inmates referred to the location of the trailers as an inconvenience, explaining that it was difficult bringing their necessities and children back and forth between their cottage and the trailers. While they are encouraged to spend as much time as possible in the trailers, they must return to the cottage to make phone calls, do laundry, and receive regular visits. Also, children are not allowed to play in the area outside of the trailers so that even outdoor recreation necessitates a walk

over to the women's cottage. Following are some of the complaints:

> "Location of trailer, difficult to get things done. Mothers must come over to (women's cottage) for the kids to play. Mothers can't cook and clean and have their kids just outside. It makes it difficult - not a normal situation."
>
> "I'd like to see the trailer closer (to the women's cottage). It's kind of scary to me. So close to the road and right out in the open."
>
> "Why can't they set aside a small area (near the trailer) for a swingset and benches? I don't like to come up here (to women's cottage) unless I have to."

The second limitation pointed to by inmates and staff focused on a lack of activities for the children during the extended visits. This was seen as a particular problem when visits involved children aged ten or older. Suggestions for improvements included the purchase of more games and toys, volunteers to create and supervise activities, supervised group trips to the movies, bowling or out to eat, and designation of an area where older children can play softball, volleyball and basketball. In addition to providing activities to fill some of the children's time, mothers also believed that they would lend to a more normal atmosphere.

The third limitation, lack of transportation for some mothers' children, proved to be a constant nuisance for program staff. In almost one-fifth of the visits, staff had to either deal with late arrivals or pick-ups of the children or had to scramble to put together transportation at the last minute, sometimes having to provide it themselves. Staff complained that the responsibility of transporting children should not fall on program staff. It was also frustrating to some participants who viewed it as their only obstacle to seeing their children. Transportation continues to be an area of need, despite the Program Coordinator's multiple efforts to address the problem.

Other staff suggestions for improvements centered on the participants themselves. They felt that more should be expected of the participants and that participation standards should be more strict.

"Better preparation at Framingham. Get groups started there about the reality of the program and our expectations."

"We have to kick some people out of the program - get tough. The credibility and integrity of the program needs to be a priority."

"Prepare and get to know mothers better. Get a realistic assessment of where a mother is at. Get tougher on screening - not let issue of motherhood cloud the decision to allow a visit."

"Use it as an opportunity for women to become responsible adults. Maybe we did too much hand-holding. Put it more on them."

"Start out with shorter visits. Mothers don't know where kids are coming from and vice versa."

It should be noted that outside of the main improvements already mentioned, participants did not have a lot of suggestions for improvement. This is amazing given the fact that inmates are usually very critical of DOC policies and programs. One suggestion by participants included an extension of possible visitors to include grandchildren, nieces and nephews, husbands and other relatives. A few mothers thought that there should be open visiting between the trailers or at least a designated time when children and mothers could visit in each other's trailer. Finally, there were "wish-list" suggestions for furnishing the trailers with a washer/dryer, ironing board, iron, television, radio, etc..... Most of these suggestions were voiced with a smile. Inmate participants were largely satisifed with the provisions in the trailer and the overall running of the program.

## B. Participation/Non-Participation

One of the concerns of the Visiting Cottage Advisory Board was that there were not as many extended visits in the trailers at Lancaster as had been anticipated. That is, given the number of screened applicants who could have had visits at any given time, the three trailers could have been at least filled during each weekend. That means at least twelve extended visits could have taken place

monthly or more, if they had been used during the week. Excluding January, the yearly average number of visits per month was 9.8, compared to 13.6 eligible participants.

**Table 11**

**Number of Visits and Eligible Participants Per Month**

| Month | Number of Visits[8] | Number of Eligible Participants |
|---|---|---|
| January (26th) | 1 | 15 |
| February | 13 | 14 |
| March | 11 | 14 |
| April | 13 | 15 |
| May | 9 | 16 |
| June | 3 | 11 |
| July | 6 | 9 |
| August | 6 | 9 |
| September | 9 | 15 |
| October | 9 | 15 |
| November | 14 | 15 |
| December | 15 | 17 |
| Average Per Month (excluding January) | 9.8 | 13.6 |

While the Board had anticipated a variety of problems, non-participation was not one of them. There were several women who had one or two visits and did not arrange any others. On the other hand, some mothers had visits on a regular basis, one scheduling a visit any weekend a trailer was available. The question of non-participation, especially during the summer months of 1985, became a serious issue at Lancaster. At meetings, Board members tried to understand the under-utilization of the program. Lancaster staff could not understand the underuse and

were critical. The administration questioned the necessity of having three trailers and of the residents' commitment to the program in general. The residents, although questioned, did not seem to have any answers.

When staff were asked why VCP participants had so few visits the majority of responses either found fault with some of the mothers or attributed to them other reasons for the lack of visits. A few staff mentioned problems with transportation, the caretakers' reluctance, the inmate's preference for furloughs, and the conflicting work schedules of some women on pre-release. In pointing the finger at mothers, a number of staff felt some of the women were selfish and did not think of their children as a priority. In the same light, a few staff believed some women did not want to be mothers. Other staff, who were more sympathetic, believed that some mothers were afraid to have their children for a weekend, or that the mothers were not capable of handling the kids or saying good-bye after a weekend. It was pointed out that visits were a lot of work for mothers, especially for long-termers who had learned to be dependent on the system for their needs and then were expected to care for their children's, as well as their own. One staff member noted that women who have a difficult visit often wait a while before scheduling another. The responses below are a representation of staff criticisms in this area.

> 'Because word got out that it wasn't as fun as they thought. They have to do all the cooking, and cleaning and kids are brats. They're selfish, want their needs taken care of - hard for them to give to their kids.
>
> 'Some just were not prepared - scared to death of facing kids for a whole weekend -postponing it till release.'
>
> 'Would rather do their own thing, even work. Some have no perceptions of a child's own needs.'
>
> "They're so damaged when they get to prison, they're socially and emotionally battered. We have to guard against trying to take and use our values to look at these people."

In her discussion of this issue in her annual program report, the Program Coordinator noted that ten scheduled visits had been cancelled at the mother's

request. She concluded,

> "Most participants are content with one visit per month, often a mother on minimum security will be an active participant but once she turns pre-release security, participation declines. Far too many children could not compete with drugs or alcohol prior to their mother's incarceration and they can not compete with work-release, furloughs and PRA's at Lancaster." (MCI-Lancaster, 1986: 6).

In the exit interviews, inmate mothers who had limited participation were asked to explain why. One woman had gotten a couple of visits by her son, but after a very serious conflict with the grandmother (the caretaker), the son was not allowed by the caretaker to visit again. In another case, a mother with two older children stated that she had found it easier to visit with her children on furloughs and Program Related Activity (P.R.A.) time, rather than in the Visiting Cottage Program. She cited her busy schedule, the age of her children and thus their teenage activities and the fact that there were less activities for older children at the facility. Another woman, with three active boys, also preferred furlough visits over VCP visits, although the visits she did have were judged to be very successful by several staff. However some women were vague when they were asked about their low participation. Others brought up problems with transportation, caretakers or schedules, which in several cases, turned out to be invalid.

The infrequent and frequent participants were both asked about the general reasons for low or no participation by some women. Their responses varied. Several brought up transportation and scheduling problems, but many were critical of their fellow residents or pointed to a lack of capabilities. Some mothers accused others of not caring or being selfish, immature and not knowing what they wanted. A few residents pointed out that some mothers had not been in the mother role before incarceration and could not be expected to take on that role now. Others were more sympathetic to non- or infrequent participants, discussing the fears of rejection, inadequacy or instability that some have. The responses by VCP

participants below are very revealing.

> 'Once women get on work release, they have their minds geared to getting out. Their goals change a little and they don't have much time.'
>
> 'A combination of things. I think some women are afraid to be with their kids. They'll deal with it when they get out. Maybe some don't care. I hear women talk about how much difficulty they've had in the past with kids.'
>
> 'Some think that as long as their kids are being cared for, they're okay. It must be immaturity, selfishness, or maybe they were brought up that way. Maybe those children are better off not seeing them.'

In addition to the interviews, a statistical analysis comparing low and high frequency participants was conducted. The women were divided into three groups: non-participants, infrequent participants (those with visits less often than monthly), and frequent participants (those with visits more frequent than monthly). The three groups were then compared along a number of social background, family, criminal history and present incarceration variables. The results of the analysis, utilizing the chi square statistic, can be found in the Appendix. Overall the analysis found few definitive differences among the three groups.

Table 12

Frequency of Visits in the VCP Trailers

| | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| No Visits | 8 | (21) |
| Infrequent Visits | 9 | (24) |
| Frequent Visits | 21 | (55) |

Only one of the social background and family variables, mother's age, was found to statistically differentiate the groups. Seventy-five percent of the

mothers with no participation were age 29 or younger on January 1, 1986. This is compared to 52% of the frequent participants and only 22% of the infrequent participants in this age category. There is also a slight difference (though not statistically significant) among the groups as far as marital status. While the overall number of married VCP participants is low, none of the non-participants were married compared to 11% of the infrequent and 29% of the frequent participants.

In terms of criminal history, the only difference among the groups that was statistically significant was the factor of prior adult incarcerations. None of the women considered infrequent participants had previously been incarcerated. In comparison, 24% of the frequent participants and 38% of the non-participants had prior incarcerations.

A look at the present offense of the three groups shows that inmate mothers with no visits were less likely to be incarcerated for a person or sex offense. Tied to that, they were also much more likely to be serving indeterminate sentences. The variable which yielded the greatest difference among the groups was furlough participation. Half of the women with no visits were furlough participants. All but one of the infrequent participants (89%) were also furlough participants. However only one-third of the frequent participants had been on furlough during their present incarceration.

Overall it appears that the women who had frequent visits were a rather heterogeneous group. The women with no visits tended to be youngest and unmarried. They were also more apt to be serving an indeterminate sentence for a non-person offense and have had more prior charges and incarcerations than the other two groups. The infrequent participants were oldest and none of them had been previously incarcerated. Finally, furlough participation was an important factor. Nearly all of the infrequent participants had been on furlough compared to

one-third of the frequent participants and one-half of the non-participants.

## C. Security and Disciplinary Issues

The Planning Board had long and often heated discussions about the security needed to ensure the safety of the participants and the success of the visits. Through the interviews conducted and the observations made, it appears that the security measures and regulations put into practice at the facility were perceived as adequate and successful. The inmate and staff perceptions of security, as well as the few breeches in security that did occur, are presented in this chapter.

During the Planning Board's meetings, curfew hours were developed and off-limit areas were specified. In addition, several rules were made about visiting. Children were not allowed to go into the living quarters of the female residents. No persons were allowed in the trailers during a visit, save the mother and the children participating in the extended visit. This rule also prohibited mothers or their children from visiting in each other's trailer.

The greatest debate focused on the question of whether security checks should be compulsory at night. Advocates of the checks felt their absence would jeopardize the safety of the children, and possibly the mother. They argued that mothers would be faced with the temptations of alcohol and drug use, escape and outside visitors. Those opposed to the checks felt that they were intrusive, unnecessary and would frighten children. The policy developed called for two security checks to be conducted by female correctional counselors, to be performed as unobtrusively as possible.

Although inmate mothers were not specifically questioned about security checks, a number of them brought up the issue during the interviews. About a handful of mothers complained about the checks, stating thay they and their

children were sometimes frightened or awakened by them. A couple of these mothers felt that once a woman had successfully completed a number of visits, security checks of her trailer should be suspended. Another handful of women spoke of the security checks in a positive light. Some said that they felt safer knowing somebody would check on them during the night. They pointed out that the trailers were close to the public road and the men's cottage and counted on the check to ease their minds. Other women commended the correctional staff's unobtrusive manner of carrying them out. A few women commented on the overall trust that staff seemed to have in the participants.

Overall, the VCP participants had very few complaints about the security-related aspects of the Visiting Cottage Program. A few participants, however, were concerned about their safety in the trailers. They suggested more locks, an emergency buzzer near the bedrooms, a buzzer intercom system and better instruction as to the operation of the present intercom.

The staff were surprised over the relative absence of infractions experienced during the first year's visits. Only one disciplinary report was issued to a mother during a visit. The mother had sent up food to other residents that she had prepared in the trailer, against program rules. A couple of incident reports were written due to similar infractions. The other few incident reports focused on children found in off-limits areas such as the men's basketball court. While it is important for staff to enforce program rules and guidelines, none of the above infractions were considered serious nor resulted in any danger or security threat.

The one security problem that was considered to be serious and a threat to the very existence of the program, was the suspicion that a small number of participants entertained male inmate visitors during trailer visits at night. An examination of the visit sheets yielded a total of six women who were under suspicion at one time or another for entertaining a male visitor. Suspicions were

aroused mostly by rumors from other residents but also by unexplained events and circumstances. Several curious incidents happened until a major security infraction brought the suspicions to a head and to the awareness of the entire facility. A male resident escaped and it was conjectured that he did so when he realized he could not return to his own living quarters, from the trailer, without detection. The mother, whose involvement was suspected, had to terminate her visit because staff were afraid that she might also escape and bring along her child. The mother was transferred back to Framingham until the escaped resident was found. He turned himself in the following day. Lancaster staff and a large number of inmate residents were shocked and angry that some participants had abused the program in such a manner.

> 'I'm surprised women would jeopardize their stay at Lancaster and subject their children to this ordeal (of men in the trailer).'
>
> "People hurt the program. I think it was disgraceful. Even if you get over on the system, what about your child?"

After the incident, a number of women approached the Program Coordinator to express their anger or to confirm the rumors. The Coordinator held a participant meeting and warned them that such activity would not be tolerated and that they were not only jeopardizing their individual visits and their stay at Lancaster, but also the existence of the program. Staff also decided that the security checks, which had sometimes been carried out inconsistently, had to be regular and that there was a need for better coordination between the correctional staff in the men's and women's cottages.

Although never confirmed, it was common belief that such visits did occur over a short period of time, and also that after the incident, they stopped occurring. A few of the Correctional Counselors concluded that the Visiting Cottage Program should not be located in a co-correctional facility. As one put it, "I think it's a good and necessary program. I think Lancaster, because it's co-ed is

a bad place for it."

However, when one considers the openness of the facility, the location of the trailers and the fact that the population is both male and female, it is almost surprising that so few security problems and breeches did occur. Although the problem of male visitors was a very serious threat, it was swiftly detected and dealt with in a manner that was deemed fair and successful by inmates and staff alike. It should be noted that throughout the first year of operation, there was no suspicion of either alcohol or substance abuse in the trailers. For the most part, the fears of some people about the dangers of the program, were unfounded.

## D. Program Staffing

Initially, the Planning Board called for one full-time Program Coordinator and two half-time Family Therapist positions. The three positions were filled but after a late start-up due to delays, one of the therapists withdrew from the position. It was decided to begin the program with one therapist and to eventually hire another. However, with the summer decrease in program participation, the second position was not filled and the first was changed to a thirty hour position.

During this entire evaluation, the program was staffed by the same two women. Although this evaluation did not include an assessment of staff performance, some mention must be given to their performance in this report. Throughout my interviews with staff and inmates alike, there were many compliments paid to both the Program Coordinator and the Family Therapist for the hard work, creativity, flexibility and understanding that they put into this effort. The staff (S) and resident (R) comments below are a small sample of the compliments heard.

S '(She's) done a remarkable job. Has had so many roles to play.'

R '(The Program Coordinator) - God bless her - the personal touch that she gives.'

S 'Excellent. I think they complimented each other. Too bad the female inmates haven't taken advantage of it. They're always accessible - go beyond the call of duty.'

R "(Family Therapist) - she's great. I can just pour out whatever. She helps in a way that helps me carry on."

R "If it weren't for the efforts of (the Program Coordinator), there's no way the program would have lasted... She is actually enthusiastic. Does a lot of things she's not required to do."

It was obvious from these comments and from the researcher's observations that the selection of both qualified and dedicated staff was instrumental in implementing a program such as this in as smooth a manner as it was done.

During the interviews, staff were asked questions about the number and type of program positions and for any suggestions on staffing issues. Most believed the staffing pattern was sufficient and that no changes were needed. They felt that it had proven essential to have a program coordinator separate from the family therapist. Other staff thought that there should be three program positions. They believed that three persons were needed to provide the program with sufficient coverage and/or that it would have been preferable to have two part-time family therapists. A couple of staff thought a third position could be filled by a correctional counselor, who could provide the extra coverage needed and help the participants with the daily problems and needs associated with being a mother and program participant. Other suggestions included a part-time transportation provider, an assistant program coordinator and cadre caregivers. Finally, several staff acknowledged the stress and inevitability of burn-out associated with these positions, noting the necessity of long and flexible hours as well as the intensity of problems encountered with inmate mothers and their families.

## E. Quality of Visits

Assessing the quality of the mother's visit with her child(ren) is a difficult and complicated task. The attempt to do so in this evaluatuon through interviews with inmate mothers, caretakers and staff and a perusal of the visit sheets, yielded multiple definitions of a quality visit. The various parties not only assigned different levels of meaning to the concept but also had varying opinions about the quality of the visits. That is, mothers and caretakers overwhelmingly believed that the mothers had quality visits with their children in the trailers. An examination of the visit sheets confirms a greater number of positive than negative visits. However, staff perceived that many of the participants did not have quality visits with their children. These varying perceptions are outlined below.

Eighteen inmate mothers were given exit interviews either just before they were released or at the end of the data collection period if they were still at Lancaster. They were asked about the most positive aspects of the program. Their responses tended to center on the quality of the visits and their benefits. Half of the women believed the most positive aspect is that these visits are private and longer and really give the family the time to be together. A similar number of women spoke of the visits as an opportunity to "get closer" to their children, to develop the mother role and to get used to being around children again.

> "Privacy with children. When you're in the trailer, you have more opportunity to talk. It's quiet, more like home."
>
> "For me, being in the home setting with no outsiders involved, it gives me a chance to build my role as a mother or weave that role into their lives again. Gradually, it's taken place - instead of boom, all at once when released."
>
> "Good way to start reuniting. You can set standards for behavior and follow through".

The perception of quality visits was also evident in the mothers' discussions

of how overnight visits were different than regular day visits. Some of the same themes emerged such as the increased privacy, the length of visits and the opportunity for meaningful conversations. Mothers also explained how relations were more forced and strained during visits that lasted hours compared to those that lasted days. They felt overnight visits in the trailer afforded them more opportunity to feel like a normal family and to be relaxed.

> 'Was like so relaxing and - just knowing you had all that extra time to feel them out. There was no rush, we could play it by ear. Then we started talking little by little. When you only have a few hours, you can't get into anything serious ... you can't show feelings.'

> 'You are more relaxed and so are your kids. You're able to sit down and talk at length. Able to bring problems to the surface. If they're only here two or three hours, they would still have doubts. But in the trailer, they can watch you.'

Caretakers were also questioned about the qualitative differences between extended VCP and regular visits. Although the caretakers did not discuss their answers in detail, they brought up similar benefits of the extended visits to those brought up by the mothers. In descending order of frequency, they mentioned privacy, length of visits, better opportunity to talk, lack of bars and searches, less limitations on the visits, and the comfortable atmosphere of the trailer and its positive effects on both mothers and children. When caretakers were asked whether or not children wanted to return for further visits, they reported that all of the children who could talk expressed a desire to return. They themselves wanted the children to have further visits, except for one caretaker who believed the visit was emotionally harmful and two who were not sure.

Overall, in the interviews with inmate mothers, there were mostly positive comments about the program and the visits. Most mothers spoke endearingly of their visits. A small number of mothers were very insightful about their relationship, their children's needs and the importance of visits. A few others talked about the importance of visits to them and the difficulties experienced at

the end of an extended visit.

> "It was great. Having him sleep over - being there in the morning. Like being home again. In a way it was harder, you get used to having him around, but then he has to leave. It was worth that difficulty though."
>
> "It was beautiful. We could eat, talk, cook and do all those things together. When they left, that was when I felt the pain."

Other mothers spoke less in terms of feelings and more in terms of activities and other more shallow issues. For instance one mother felt that her relationship with her daughter during the first visit was only semi-successful, because there were few activities for her to do and therefore they could only talk.

Discussion with staff tended to yield more cynicism regarding the quality of visits and the mothers' motives. One of the greatest disappointments to staff was their perception that some mothers manipulated the program for their own benefit and that they were not sincere about their mothering roles. However another concern expressed by staff was the actual quality of the visits, the mother-child relationship and the parental skills of some of the VCP mothers. While some of the staff spoke about these issues in a condescending manner, many showed empathy toward the mothers.

> 'Need more help for women. It's not enough to put them together. If the mother isn't prepared, the visit will be sterile.'
>
> "Some couldn't be mothers. I found it sad that some kids used to enjoy being with me more than with their mothers sometimes."
>
> 'The long-termers were different. They had been separated from kids, the average was five years and what I observed was that the relationship was very stiff and they didn't know one another. It seemed forced. Children were looking for them as mothers and mothers were uncomfortable in that role. Couldn't relate to them as a child. But the mothers just hadn't had the contact with children. They were kind of winging it. And kids still try to make it work. These mothers need to learn to relate to children all over again.'
>
> "One problem is that for some women to go from no responsibility to full responsibility is tough."
>
> 'Some women really appeared to enjoy their children. Some women without that close relationship had a difficult time and gave up. Then there were some who wanted to get out of the building - most often

they were short-termers. Then there were women who used it often but I didn't see any rapport. Can't figure out if we're dealing with a lack of parental skills or a lack of interest.'

Despite the disappointments stated, almost all of the staff pointed to the mothers who used the program well and experienced quality visits as the most satisfying feature of the program. A few noted how happy the kids were on visits and how the visits went better than expected.

"Seeing the faces of kids. They always seemed to be happy."

'Overall the visits went well. Some had better relationships than what I would have expected.'

'Some of the women I worked with - some impressed me incredibly - the common sense and insight of a few.'

Because of the discrepancies, an examination of the visit sheets was carried out. This confirmed some of the complaints made by staff. For instance, program staff have witnessed visits where the relationship between a mother and her children appeared strained and forced. They have noted that some mothers acted indifferent to their children, and/or largely ignored them during visits from male friends or other relatives. Some of the children were not properly supervised and ended up out-of-bounds or in the care of other residents. There was also a certain segment of mothers who spent most of their days back at the regular housing cottage mingling with residents instead of spending the time alone with their children in the trailers. Some of the mothers, regardless of the quality of their visit, appeared exhausted and drained by the end of visits.

Next the visit sheets of each of the 22 women[9] were grouped together and subjectively judged by the researcher to reflect positive visits, negative visits or visits with mixed results. Thus when staff viewed a loving relationship, appropriate interaction and attention and relatively problem-free visits, they were judged as positive. Visits where relations were strained or forced or where the mother appeared to be indifferent, were judged as negative. Mixed visits were those where

the mother had difficulties despite her apparently sincere efforts and caring. Sixteen of the 28 women (57%) were subjectively judged to have overall positive visits. Seven women (25%) had mixed visits and only five women (18%) were judged to have poor visits with their children. It should be noted that for many of the mothers with multiple visits, interaction improved over time. Thus it is conceivable that mixed or poor visits might also improve over time. When the women were broken down by length of time already incarcerated, two-thirds of the short-termers experienced positive visits compared to a little more than one-third of the long-termers. This seems to go along with some of the observations made by the general Lancaster staff. When broken into frequent and infrequent participants, there is not a substantial difference. Half of the infrequent visitors were judged to have positive visits compared to 60% of the frequent visitors. It is interesting to note that most of the women with infrequent but quality visits used furlough participation as another means to see their children. Regarding mothers' abilities to relate to their children, the Program Coordinator made the following observations in the program's first annual report,

> "Mothers with lengthy substance abuse histories, lengthy criminal histories or serving long incarcerations have greater difficulty relating to their children than those mothers who have not been removed from the realities of daily child care for extended periods. Mothers who have been separated due to substance abuse or incarceration tend to lack spontaneity, they interact in stereotyped roles, i.e. disciplinarian, over indulgent, or as peers rather than parents." (MCI-Lancaster, 1986: 5)

The attempt to assess the quality of visits during this evaluation has raised more questions than it has answered. It is interesting how the inmate mothers speak so highly of the quality of their visits and how children overwhelmingly appear happy and yet staff doubt the quality of the visiting time. However, an examination of the visit sheets, while confirming some of the staff's complaints, found that more than half of the participants consistently experienced positive visits and less than one-fifth experienced negative visits. Perhaps the varying

perceptions can be attributed to cultural or class differences. It also may be that the negative experiences associated with some women heavily overshadowed the positive ones associated with most. Finally, we must not forget that the bulk of a visit takes place in the privacy of the trailer and that the mother and her children are the only people who can truly assess the experience.

## F. Inmates as Mothers

Allowing children to visit their mothers in prison brought to the surface a new aspect of female residents at Lancaster - inmates as mothers. With that came a whole new set of expectations. Once the program was underway, there was a realization of the complexity of the lives of these women and their children. Staff began to view residents and residents began to view each other in a different, and at times, disturbing light. Although the measurement of the participants' parental skills were not part of this evaluation, the researcher did keep track of the staff's changing perceptions of the participants as mothers. This section will outline those changes in perception and will briefly raise some of the issues often associated with inmates as mothers.

The first perception of change to be discussed is that the participants themselves changed throughout the program's first years. Nine of eleven staff thought that the participants themselves had changed, although not all agreed about how they had changed. Most thought that the women who initially participated had been more invested in their children and had worked harder at their relationships. They felt that later participants were less enthusiastic and more manipulative. A couple of staff felt that later participants were more invested and more maternal than the initial group. One staff person believed that it was not so much a matter of earlier or later inmates but that participants in

general became less enthused after their initial visits. Perhaps the most detailed account of the changes was written by the initial Program Coordinator for the facility's annual report:

> "Program participants have demonstrated three separate and distinct attitudes towards the program. Initially, mothers were enthusiastic, cooperative and appreciative. There was considerable peer pressure to protect the privileges offered by the program. During the summer months when it had been anticipated the program would have increased utilization due to school vacation, participants were apathetic... The third period in the program's operation was characterized by immature behaviors and management concerns, i.e. rules were violated, there was marked decrease in the level of appreciation, and the program's structure was frequently tested. Presently, there is a resurgence of peer pressure to protect the program's privileges." (MCI-Lancaster, 1986:6).

Classification and program staff pointed out that the number of female residents transferred from Framingham to Lancaster decreased during the summer months and contributed to the decreased number of eligible and active participants. After some prodding of Framingham classification staff by Lancaster's administration, a new wave of female transfers arrived at Lancaster, all within a short period of time. A large percentage of these transfers were long-term offenders who had already been incarcerated for a number of years. This resulted in a change in the make-up of program participants. It is therefore not surprising that the decline and subsequent surge of female residents caused shifts in participant motivation and attitude.

The second type of change was discovered when staff were asked if the program had changed their perceptions and feelings about incarcerated women as mothers. Five replied that the program had not changed their perceptions of these women as mothers. However the remaining six staff began to perceive inmate mothers in a less positive light as a result of the program. The first four responses below reflect an outright criticism of some of the female residents as mothers. These staff tended to believe that children, instead of being mother's top priority,

were in actuality, being used by some mothers to gain advantages and privileges. The following three responses are not so much critical of the inmate mothers per se, but reflect a realization that their expectations of them were too high and were based on those of middle-class families.

> "Yes in a negative way. Made me see that here we are trying to put them with their kids and we're providing a setting, support and food and they're still failing as mothers. Some did good."
>
> "Yes, think a lot of rhetoric from mothers about how important families are is talk. I have been impressed with some women though."
>
> "Yes, think most is a gaff to get parole or pre-release."
>
> "When I first came here I thought a mother was a mother was a mother. From people I knew, I thought I know what mothers were but I've see some nasty mothers. They don't put children as their priority."
>
> 'Others counselors had higher expectations than they should. These women don't have nurturing backgrounds. It's not instinct, it's learned. Can't expect them all to be "good mothers", although a lot of them try.'
>
> 'Had very idealistic ideas. Realized how terribly needy they are and on some levels they have the same needs as their children do.'
>
> 'For three years I was brainwashed because mothers were continually seeking privileges based on concern for children and I thought their relationships were like my middle-class idea of it. Didn't understand what addiction did, how it was all compelling.'

It is interesting that the staff who were outright critical and cynical of these mothers did not have access to or knowledge of these women's family histories and circumstances prior to incarceration. Within the first year, program staff and those who worked closely with program participants learned that the majority of these inmate mothers had very complex lives, often involving serious substance abuse and/or family crisis going back sometimes to two generations. In her study of women in prison; Katherine Burkhart found similar problems with the inmate mothers she interviewed.

> "Some women who were deeply into the life before they went to prison neglected their children because of drugs, alcoholism or prostitution. Many had their children stay with friends or relatives because they didn't want their children exposed to the life they were in. Many never

had good mothering themselves, so they really have no "mother model" to return with from jail even if they love their children deeply and want to be effective, responsible mothers themselves." (Burkhart, 1973: 411)

As mentioned previously, a number of women in this study were separated from their children prior to incarceration as a result of their substance abuse. Several additional women required the assistance of their mothers to help care for their children for the same reason. A large number had been incarcerated either for drug charges or for crimes committed due to their substance abuse. In interviews, some inmate mothers spoke about cocaine and heroin habits costing hundreds of dollars a day. Clearly alcohol and drug abuse have had a severe impact on the VCP participants' role as mother.

In Mothers in Prison, Baunach (1985) writes about inmate mothers who use drugs and refers to their pre-incarceration lifestyle as "schizophrenic". In her interviews with these mothers, she learned that some tried to juggle the two lives (junkie by day, mother by night) while others gave up, relinquishing child care to their relatives. But for most, they not only had to deal with the stigma and guilt associated with being convicted and thus separated from their children, but also were faced with being a pusher or junkie. This additional guilt affected their self-perception and ultimately their relationship with their children. Many of the mothers Baunach spoke with had difficulty disciplining their children and they lacked the credibility and confidence needed to play the role of mother. Some women, whose children were raised from birth by their own mothers, related to the children as siblings. Others, whose children had experienced their down-fall with drugs, related to them as peers or in reversed roles. Baunach also noted that some mothers never developed a closeness with their children as a result of their drug use and the "fast pace of street life" sometimes associated with it.

Baunach's findings fit in closely with those of the program staff and this researcher's observations of VCP mothers wth substance abuse histories. Several

women related to their children as siblings, peers or in reversed roles and some could not relate to their children at all. Program staff further noted the self-centeredness of these women and how sometimes their present needs take priority, as their past drug needs had, over many things, even their children. One inmate described a number of VCP participants as on the fence, "dappling between going straight and taking care of their kids or still continuing their old lives" of drugs. If indeed there are women who are caught between these two lives or are still trying to make the transition, it is no wonder that staff have found them to be both less-than-perfect mothers and very needy individuals.

One of the criticisms of some of the inmate mothers heard from staff was that some mothers seemed totally oblivious to their children. Staff pointed to some inmate mothers who were not emotionally demonstrative to their own children, but doted on the children of their peers. Other mothers were witnessed "passing off" their children to their visitors, program staff or fellow residents. Undoubtedly some of this indifference can be blamed on a lack of parental skills or doubts about one's desire to be a mother. However some researchers have found that female inmates, and especially those with children, construct an invisible wall for the duration of their incarceration, shutting out the the possibility of emotion and hurt. Giallombardo wrote about this observation in her book about the inmate culture at Alderson, a federal prison for women.

> "A particularly frustrating aspect of imprisonment for the female inmate is that she is not in a position to control the course of events in the outside world; children may be neglected, for example; husbands may become unfaithful or may obtain a divorce; a loved one may die. To dwell persistently on events in the outside world is to run the risk of doing 'hard time.'... Therefore, the prisoner must learn - and here her sister prisoners are helpful - to suspend deep emotional involvement in outside events. She develops an immunity to emotional shock to events both within and without the prison gate for the term of her sentence." (Giallombardo, 1966: 94)

This lack of emotional involvement was apparent when a few of the inmate

mothers were asked about their worries concerning their separation from their children. While most mothers went on and on about their worries regarding their children's proper care (school, safety, health, supervision), some mothers, especially the long-termers, could not specify their worries. They spoke more in general terms or future terms, not letting themselves think of their children's daily lives. One mother even answered that she had trained herself not to worry for the nine months she had to spend in prison. She mentioned all the weight she had lost when she was initially incarcerated and how she had had to stop worrying or thinking to remain healthy. Some mothers may have poor parenting skills and others might be on the fence deciding between two types of lives. Perhaps there are other women who have "handled the hurt by a deliberate shell of indifference, and staff, long accustomed to the situation, have grown insensitive to the mothers' real feelings" (Keve, 1974: 79). Whatever the circumstances may be, providing mothers and children with a place to visit will not ensure quality mothering or the development/maintenance of a healthy family relationship.

## G. Impact On Lancaster Staff

As can be seen from the last two sections, the Visiting Cottage Program has produced a variety of opinions and reactions from staff. This section will briefly examine the differences in those opinions and reactions and explore some of the possible reasons for the variance.

During the interviews, staff were asked what had surprised them the most during the program's first year. The most frequent response was that the level of participation had been much lower than expected. This was not only their biggest surprise but also the staff's greatest disappointment in the program. They thought that mothers would naturally leap at the chance to visit with their children in a

setting away from correctional staff and the day-to-day activities. The Lancaster staff had not been aware of the complexity of the lives of these inmate mothers and their children before the program began. They had not known how the mothers' substance abuse, repeated incarcerations, and own family experiences could so deeply affect their role as mothers and thus, their participation in the program.

During the interviews, staff were asked about the reputation of the program among Lancaster's security or line staff and among its administrators. There was a wide discrepancy in responses regarding the reputation of the program among Lancaster's line staff. Only three staff believed it had a good reputation. The remaining eight people thought that the program either had a bad or mixed reputation among security staff. A sampling of their responses demonstrates the discrepancies and also the reasons why it is viewed in a negative manner by some.

> "Anyone worth their weight could see a redeeming necessity in it."
>
> 'Mixed feelings. Some don't like it because it's more work for them. Some think it's a liberal way to give inmates more than they deserve.'
>
> 'At first people were afraid of it. Weren't sure how it was going to change their jobs. There's not a lot of enthusiasm for it.'
>
> "Line staff think the whole program is a gaff - they don't buy into it. To them it's a nuisance and just adds security checks and issues."
>
> "(Line staff) saw no redeeming value in it. They should have been drawn into it more. After a year we should have brought them together and let them know we've got to stop expecting so much of residents."

As to its reputation among the Lancaster administration, the responses varied depending on the position of the respondent. The few administrators interviewed felt it was a good program and were supportive of its continuance, despite some of the initial disappointments. But most program and line staff felt that the administration's enthusiasm for the Visiting Cottage Program had dwindled. Some believed that the administration did not provide the continual support and attention that new programs require. Others acknowledged the disappointment that

administrators must have felt when the participation was at a low after having directed a lot of resources into the program.

While there was no clear consensus about any aspect of the program among the staff, it was very clear to this researcher and also to the program staff that the program has had an impact on the Lancaster staff in general and the female correctional counselors in particular. While program staff were privy to often sensitive and personal information regarding the family lives of these women, the female correctional counselors and other Lancaster staff were not. They therefore viewed the actions of participants in a void and hence, made different conclusions. The Program Coordinator felt that it had been difficult for correctional staff to see the inmates as mothers. As she put it, "We were much better off when we were naive". Since motherhood is a very personal concept to which we all attach our own meaning, it was difficult for staff to incorporate this very personal level of understanding into the daily routine of a correctional facility. During the interviews, some staff focused on the inmates whom they thought had abused the program or were manipulative and selfish. When pressed further, it was revealed that their negative impressions of one or two inmate mothers had clearly overshadowed all of the other participants.

The realization of the impact of the program on the Lancaster staff, has resulted in the creation of some training sessions for the female correctional counselors. These sessions have been well-received by the female line staff and it is hoped that such sessions can be expanded and continued.

## H. Comparison of Long-Term and Short-Term Inmate Mothers

As reported in the description of the Visiting Cottage Program applicants, 24 (63%) of the 38 women had been incarcerated for eight months or less on January

1, 1985. The remaining 14 women (37%) had been incarcerated for twenty months or more. Since the groups differed markedly in the time they have already spent in prison, it was thought that there might be differences in their social backgrounds, criminal histories and present offense information, as well as, their issues and needs regarding their separation from their children and their participation in the program. This section explores the differences between the long-term vs. short-term inmate mothers who applied for participation in the Visiting Cottage Program.

First a comparison was made between these "short-termers" and "long-termers". The social background, criminal history and present offense variables were dichotomized and the chi square statistic was applied. The results of this comparison are presented in Table 13.

There appeared to be no differences between the short- and long-termers in terms of race, age, education, or number of children. As one might expect, the children of long-termers tended to be slightly older. There was a statistically significant difference between the two groups' marital status. While the majority of all of the inmate mothers were single, separated or divorced, none of the long-termers were married, compared to 29% of the short-termers.

When comparing the criminal histories of short- and long-termers, there were mostly only minimal differences. For example, long-termers were apt to have appeared in court less frequently and to have less prior property and alcohol charges, but more prior person charges than short-termers. They were also younger at their first arrest and were more apt to have no prior incarcerations (86%) compared to short-termers (75%). However none of these differences were statistically significant. One difference that was statistically significant, had to do with number of prior charges for drug offenses. Short-termers were more likely to have three or more prior charges for drug offenses (38%) than long-termers

Table 13

Comparison of Long-Term and Short-Term Inmate Mothers

| | Chi Square Value | Difference Significant at: |
|---|---|---|
| **Social Background** | | |
| Race | 0.0 | N.S. |
| Marital Status | 3.2 | .10 |
| Age on 1/1/85 | 0.1 | N.S. |
| Last Grade Completed | 0.0 | N.S. |
| Number of Children | 0.0 | N.S. |
| Age of Children | 0.9 | N.S. |
| Legal Custody | 3.4 | 0.1 |
| Caretaker While Incarcerated | 1.2 | N.S. |
| Separation from Siblings | 4.8 | .05 |
| Contact With Father | 0.9 | N.S. |
| Involvement With D.S.S. | 0.4 | N.S. |
| **Criminal History** | | |
| Age at First Court Appearance | 0.6 | N.S. |
| Number of Court Appearances | 0.0 | N.S. |
| Number of Person Offenses | 0.2 | N.S. |
| Number of Property Offenses | 0.1 | N.S. |
| Number of Sex Offenses | 0.0 | N.S. |
| Number of Drug Offenses | 2.8 | .10 |
| Number of Alcohol Offenses | 0.4 | N.S. |
| Number of Escape Offenses | 0.1 | N.S. |
| Number of Prior Adult Incarcerations | 0.1 | N.S. |
| **Present Offense and Incarceration** | | |
| Age at Incarceration | 0.1 | N.S. |
| Present Offense | 9.2 | .01 |
| Prior Drug and Alcohol History | 3.1 | .10 |
| Total Number of Furloughs | 9.2 | .01 |

(7%). Another variable related to this was the inmate mother's admission or record (institutional and other) of a drug history. Seventy-one percent of the short-termers were known to be drug and/or alcohol abusers prior to their incarceration compared to 36% of the long-termers.

As is to be expected, there was a statistically significant difference in the present offense of the two groups. Eighty-six percent of the long-termers were incarcerated as a result of a person or sex offense whereas 71% of the short-termers were incarcerated for property, drug or other offenses. So far, one might conclude that the more appropriate label for the two groups is probably the serious, long-term offender and the repeat, drug-involved, short-term offender. While they did not differ markedly in their social background and criminal histories, a comparison of their family circumstances reveals further differentiations.

It appears that long-term inmate mothers experience a disintegration in their family due to their lengthy incarceration. A look at the custody of their children reveals that 57% of the children of long-termers were in the custody of DSS compared to 35% of the children of short-termers. The difference was statistically significant. It is interesting that 23% of the children in each group were still in the custody of their mothers alone or of both of their parents. However it appears that the long-term mothers who had not retained custody themselves, had a more difficult time ensuring that the custody of their children would be the responsibility of a relative. As to the caretaking arrangements, while there were no statistically significant differences, the children of long-termers were slightly more apt to be in foster care (36%) than the children of short-termers (23%). What is particularly interesting is that the long-termers have less children living with grandparents (36%) than the short-termers (55%). It therefore appears that while grandparents are still the predominant caretakers, they are less apt to either take on or be able to continue their child care responsibilities if the inmate mother has

a long sentence to serve.

Unfortunately, a higher percentage of long-termers had children living apart from their siblings (78%) than did the short-termers (33%). The differences were statistically significant. Similarly, the children of long-termers were less apt to have contact with their fathers. As would be expected, long-termers are slightly more likely to be involved with DSS (50%) than short-termers (33%) although the differences were not statistically significant. Not only are the long-term mothers more apt to lose custody of their children, but their children are more apt to lose touch with their mothers, fathers, siblings and extended family in general. It should be noted here that there were no differences in the prior custody or caretaking arrangments between long-termers and short-termers. Hence, the disintegration of some of the families can be attributed to the difficulties caused by a lengthy incarceration.

The experiences of long- vs. short-termers in the Visiting Cottage Program was also compared. First they were broken down into three participant groups (frequent, infrequent and non-participants). Three-fourths of the frequent participants were short-termers. Conversely, 57% of the long-termers had infrequent or no visits compared to 38% of the short-termers. When the long- and short-termers were split into those above and those below the average of one visit every 42 days, long-termers were still slightly more likely to have less or no visits. A third method of examining long-and short-termers was devised by grouping the women into those who requested and received visits from their children and those who either had no visits or who were not allowed to have some of their children visit. Although the results were also not statistically significant, slightly more long-termers did not have visits with all or some of their children (43%) compared to short-termers (29%). It therefore appears that long-termers did not participate in extended visits with their children as often as did the short-termers.

One explanation might involve the level of participation in the furlough program. It was reported previously that infrequent participants were more apt to be furlough participants than frequent or non-participants. A comparison of the furlough participation of long- and short-termers reveals that 86% of the long-termers went out on furloughs compared to 29% of the short-termers. Therfore it is likely that some long-termers have opted to visit with their children during furloughs over participation in the Visiting Cottage Program.

Another explanation for their lesser participation in the program might be that it is more difficult for long-termers to have extended visits with their children. In the sections entitled "Quality of Visits" and "Inmates as Mothers", there was documentation about the difficulties that some long-termers faced during the visits. Both residents and staff reported more of a likelihood of seemingly stiff relationships and stereotyped mothering roles. When their visit sheets were examined, two-thirds of the short-termers experienced positive visits compared to a little more than one-third of the long-termers.

Although the inmate mothers who are serving shorter sentences seem to fare well compared to the long-termers, they too have unique problems. Short-termers were more likely to have faced prior charges for drug offenses and to have a history of serious substance abuse. Such a history would necessarily affect their relationship with their children prior to their incarceration. In fact, seven of the ten mothers who had been separated from at least one of their children prior to incarceration were short-termers. All but one had serious histories of substance abuse.

Because incarceration forces abstinence on drug-involved or alcoholic mothers, they often begin to focus on their priorities (including their children) and make plans to straighten out their lives. However their incarceration ends quickly and they must face the temptation of substance abuse all over again. If they

succumb, they not only face re-incarceration but their children are faced with yet another separation from their mother either before or because of incarceration.

## I. Utilization of Treatment Services

One of the concerns of the Planning Board was that inmate mothers and their children should be prepared for an extended visit. Board members were concerned about the emotional impact of the first long and private visit, as well as the mother's parental skills and ability to provide adequate care. They were also concerned that mothers should have an opportunity to discuss their feelings and problems pertaining to their children with a qualified therapist throughout their program participation. It is for these reasons that the Family Therapist positions were created. Preparation was also available at Framingham through the many programs and services mentioned previously in this report.

Before the extended visits were started, a mother's group was planned and implemented at Lancaster. The objectives of this support group were to help mothers deal with their children on extended visits and to discuss and learn about parenting techniques. It was decided by program staff that the Family Therapist would meet with each mother prior to her first trailer visit to determine how she would handle discipline (corporal punishment was not allowed) and to discuss any other relevant issues. The Family Therapist was also available for individual counseling and was on site at some point during most extended visits.

Given all of this development of treatment services, participants were questioned about their preparedness and utilization of the Family Therapist. At the interviews after the first extended visit, mothers were asked about what kind of preparing they had done for the visit. A number of mothers seemed puzzled by the question as if wondering why any preparation was needed to visit with their

own children. A handful had not been involved with any parental programs or services at Framingham or Lancaster. Half of the 28 mothers had been involved with A.I.M. in some way during their stay at Framingham. Twelve women had attended programs sponsored by the Women's Health and Learning Center, most often the Parenting at a Distance program. A handful of mothers had worked with the Family Services Coordinator at Framingham. As for preparation at Lancaster, a number of women had attended the mother's group meetings or were in individual counseling with the Family Therapist. Other mothers mentioned participation in counseling for battered women, first aid classes, involvement with A.I.M. and discussions with the Program Coordinator. All of the 27 mothers felt they had been prepared for their first visit, though a few mentioned being scared and anxious. Twenty-five of the participants said their children had also been prepared.

Participants were also questioned about their contact with the Family Therapist, whether or not it was helpful and if they planned to maintain future contact. Eight mothers reported some participation in the mother's group, seven were in individual counseling with the Family Therapist and one mother was in both. Seven mothers said they had spoken to the Family Therapist a number of times, but on a more casual basis. Four had met her just before their first visit. Fifteen mothers mentioned that she had visited them in the trailer during their first visit.

Of the mothers who had experienced regular contact with the Family Therapist, all but one felt that the contact had been helpful. Their responses portrayed the Family Therapist as a good person and as a competent listener and advisor.

None of the participants could think of any ways in which the role of the Family Therapist could have been more helpful to them. Although the participants

clearly perceived her as competent and helpful, only a little more than half said they planned to maintain or develop regular contact with her. A number of mothers did not feel it necessary to have any contact with her regarding their children. They felt that their only issue with parenting was their actual separation from their children. However, it is clear from observation, conversations with program staff and the visit sheets, that a lot of women need to improve their parenting skills and to resolve issues pertaining to their children and their families.

During its first year of existence, the services of the Family Therapist were underutilized for both individual and group counseling. Once it was evident that a mother's group could not be sustained due to low attendance, the Family Therapist began offering Systematic Training in Effective Parenting (STEP) seminars that ran a finite number of weeks. However three sessions of STEP have resulted in only one mother completing the series. The Program Coordinator reported that the counseling services provided by the Family Therapist were extensively utilized instead for immediate support during family crises. These included the mediation of disputes between mothers and caretakers or DSS, support during court investigation, adolescent problems, and general problem-solving. Additionally, the Therapist, as well as the Program Coordinator, served as substitute caregivers during the visits when mothers became weary of child care responsibilities.

When staff were asked about the inmate mother's reluctance to participate in the services offered by the Family Therapist, varying theories emerged. A number mentioned that female inmates in general are wary of group counseling in that they do not like to reveal their feelings in front of other residents. This was mentioned by some of the participants who chose individual over group counseling. A few staff agreed with the Program Coordinator that most of the women do not think they need parenting or other counseling services. Other staff felt that parenting was not a priority, that children were unwanted and/or that some participants were

apathetic. A couple of staff thought that the experience of examining themselves and their parental issues would be too painful for them and so they had avoided it. Besides not feeling it was needed, a number of participants did explain that with work and their participation in other programs and activities at the facility, there was little time to participate in family services.

The Advisory Board has taken up this issue at many meetings. Some members feel that mothers should complete some form of parenting classes prior to participation in extended visits. Others argue that visits should not be denied based upon a mother's reluctance to participate in family services. The continuum of need has also been discussed - some mothers have been found to be model parents while others barely are able to talk to their children. This is an area that needs further discussion before further policies are implemented.

## J. Interagency Model

One of the unique aspects of the Visiting Cottage Program was that it was planned as an interagency model. During the planning stages, the state Departments of Social Services, Public Health, and Mental Health, the Office for Children, A.I.M. and the Women's Health and Learning Center all had at least one representative on the Planning Board. The Department had several members from Central Office, Framingham and Lancaster. The Board's goal was to develop guidelines and policies for the Visiting Cottage Program, which were ultimately presented to the DOC Commissioner who made all final policy decisions. In addition to advising, the representatives worked within their own departments or agencies to advocate for support of the program, to educate the necessary people about it and to secure any support and aid that the agency might lend. Once the program was implemented, the Planning Board became an Advisory Board. Its

function was to monitor the implementation of the program and to provide feedback, advice and further support when needed. At this time a representative from the Hampden County Program for Female Offenders also joined the Advisory Board. The Board met monthly or bi-monthly as needed.

It must be noted that the process of developing policy by representatives of agencies with vastly different philosophies and goals was difficult. There were often conflicting opinions regarding issues of security, treatment, and suitability criteria. Some of the meetings were characterized by high tension, with agencies at odds over various issues. However with the leadership of the then DOC Director of Programs and the representatives' strong commitment to the philosophy of the program, compromises were made, alternative solutions were found and a strong program model resulted. The inclusion of other departments and agencies in the planning not only ensured their necessary cooperation, but also brought in different outlooks and thus alternative approaches to problem-solving. Their inclusion also ensured that all aspects of the program were anticipated, discussed and planned prior to the program's start. This certainly lent to the smoothness with which the first visits of the program were experienced.

The interagency model was not only valuable in the planning stages. The various agencies and departments involved have made continual contributions throughout the program's existence. The Office for Children provided cross-training to the Program Coordinator, advised program staff as to available funding sources, and donated such necessary items as a crib, car seat and vaporizer. They also attempted to organize a volunteer transportation network, utilizing their volunteers. The Department of Public Health, which partially funds the Women's Health and Learning Center, provided funds for the clinical supervision of program staff. This clinical supervisor was also available to staff to provide advice on certain cases, situations and crises.

A.I.M. has contributed the volunteer network, which provided transportation for one-third of the visits logged during 1985. The A.I.M. staff have extended every courtesy locating volunteers or providing transportation themselves. They have willingly shared their experience in working with incarcerated mothers, their children, and families. They have alerted program staff to potential problems and issues. A.I.M.'s legal advocate has been regularly utilized by program staff as a resource for mothers dealing with custody/visitation issues.

The Women's Health and Learning Center funded three training sessions for Lancaster's female correctional counselors. The training sessions were reported as helpful by the line staff attending them. The workshops gave staff the opportunity to explore their feelings and concerns about the impact of visiting families at Lancaster. Additionally, the Health and Learning Center conducts periodic workshops for Lancaster's female residents. The workshops have been designed to support the acquisition of positive parenting skills and include Women and Children's Health, Healthy Meals and Snacks for Children, and Getting Ready for the Holidays-Staying Connected. Residents attending the workshops obviously enjoyed them for they are repeatedly well-attended. The Center provided program staff with information, which led to Lancaster receiving a thousand dollars to fund Lancaster's First Annual Family Fair and to purchase toys for visiting children.

The Department of Social Services' representative has been helpful in clarifying the Department's policy as it pertains to families involved with the program. The availability of a knowledgeable contact person has saved endless hours of staff time. The DSS representative published an article about the program in the publication distributed to all DSS caseworkers.

The Hampden County Program for Female Offenders has provided transportation volunteers for families from Springfield. Their Program Coordinator had been a valuable resource for Springfield mothers experiencing

family crises.

Despite all of the contributions made to transporting children to visits by the agencies mentioned, transportation still remains a problem. Although many attempts have been made by the Program Coordinator and outside agencies to alleviate the problem, more work needs to be done in this area. The only other need that could be resolved with the help of outside agencies is the recruitment of volunteers to conduct activities for mothers and children during the visits.

In addition to the individual contributions, the inclusion of other departments and advocacy agencies can benefit the Visiting Cottage Program in the future. Although there is current support for the VCP all around, in future years the advocacy agencies can lobby the Legislature and the Governor's Office for its continued funding. When all of these contributions are added to those made during the planning stages, the advantages to implementing an interagency model are apparent.

## VII. PROGRAM PROGRESS

The evaluation conducted of the VCP was not an outcome evaluation as it did not measure the actual effects nor success of the program. However perceptions regarding the progress made toward program objectives and the program's success were sought throughout the evaluation. The first section examines the progress made toward the program objectives. Staff perceptions of success and future program direction are outlined in the second section, along with the results of an attempted follow-up and the recidivism rate of released participants.

### A. Progress Made Toward Program Objectives

As seen throughout the report, the Visiting Cottage Program has been implemented as planned by the DOC administration and the Planning Board. Almost all of the staff pointed this out during the interviews, but many were disappointed that their expectations were not met. As one staff person put it, "All the different pieces of the puzzle were in place. What didn't go as planned is we couldn't anticipate the response of the participants" - this referring to the lower participation rate than expected. However, there was nothing but praise from both staff and participants regarding the nuts-and-bolts implementation of the program.

In reviewing the program objectives, it is safe to say that the program did accomplish many of them. For example, housing units were made available whereby inmate mothers could have quality visits with their children. All of the participants spoke highly of the trailers, noting their privacy, comfort and home-like environment. The availability of the family therapist and the development of various workshops and group sessions have afforded mothers the opportunity to deal

with their separation issues, prepare for release and obtain support and help concerning their roles as mothers. Also a true interagency model was implemented, with representatives of various agencies being involved in meetings and devising ways to enhance and aid the program.

Although some of the progress made was not as tangible, perceptions were sought from staff and participants on the effects and benefits of the program. Participants were asked if and how the program has helped them. Of the twenty respondents who answered this question, fourteen gave an answer indicating that it had helped them personally. The remaining six said it had helped their relationship with their children. No specific mention of the benefits to children were made in response to this question, however mothers did make mention of its benefit to their children elsewhere during the interviews. When asked if the program had, in any way harmed them, all of the participants responded in the negative.

The participants reported that the program had benefitted them personally in a number of ways. Many mothers felt that it had helped them with their role as mother and had taught them valuable parental and coping skills. For example, one mother explained that the rule prohibiting corporal punishment, had forced her to learn other ways of handling her son when he misbehaves. Other mothers related how the program had made them more comfortable in their role as mother, and thus more comfortable around their children. As one mother commented after listing several of the advantages to the program, "What better way to do time, than to learn to be a better parent?"

Many participants reported that the program had helped prepare them for their impending release. For some, it gave them the chance to get used to being around their children and playing the role of mother again. For others, it helped them to make plans and set priorities for the future.

'Program helped me not to be overwhelmed at the thought of going home. I started doing things like cook, clean, discipline and entertain (my child). Knowing I can do all those things and that they come natural has taken a lot of anxiety out of being released.'

"It made me grow up and realize my priorities. Instead of thinking, 'Gee what will I do when I get out', I know he's my priority."

In addition to improving their parental skills and preparing for release, mothers reported that participation had aided them in more personal ways. Some mothers felt that it had helped them to better cope overall with their incarceration. Others attributed to it an improvement in their attitude and the ways they viewed themselves.

"Happy that I could be a part of making it work so that being in jail hasn't been a total negative experience. Being part of this program has made me proud."

'Gives you more ambition. Takes your anger away. Takes you away from that constant feeling that you're in prison.'

'Helped to give me something to look forward to. Keeps me knowing that there's a fresh start, that there is hope that I'll be a mother again.'

At the exit interviews, mothers were asked whether or not the program had improved their relationship with their children. All of the mothers said that their participation had positively affected their relationship. First there were those inmate mothers who said the program had given them the chance to re-establish and reaffirm their close relationship with their children. The extended visits have given some mothers the opportunity to explain their incarceration and its results and thus to clear the path for a healthy relationship. For some mothers, the overnight visits represented the first chance they had had to engage their children in a long, serious and private conversation. The time had also given the children a chance to see what their mothers were like before re-establishing daily ties. For mothers with infants, it had given them the opportunity to bond and establish ties.

'We're closer. These visits have reinforced that I am their mother, not just from a distance... not just at the end of a telephone.'

"Helped us get back what I had worried we lost. It's kept my sanity."

"It's had a positive (effect). We got to talk and cleared things up... why I'm in jail... what happened between their father and me. And positive things - how she's changed... that I still love him. Now he says, 'I love you' too."

'He's only a baby. Every time I see him, we become closer. I get to know his ways. There's a time to get bonded.'

While mothers were very aware of the effects that the program had on themselves and their overall relationship with their children, they did not appear as aware of the direct effects on their children. Throughout the interviews, some mothers mentioned its benefits to their children, however these comments were sporadic and infrequent compared to the others. A couple of mothers mentioned that the extended visits had helped children to learn about their mothers again and thus had helped them to relate better. A few mentioned that the visits had eased the children's minds about their mothers. Some mothers had seen improvements in their children's attitude and behavior.

One mother who was a long-term offender was not so sure about the program's effects on her son. While both she and her son looked forward to the extended visits, she worried that they might have some negative effects on him as well. As she put it, "He's young and he don't understand (why I can't leave with him). It's hard to say good-bye and he acts out. I don't know what effects it will have on him in the long run."

Caretakers were interviewed (after the children's first visit to their mothers) about changes in the children due to the visit. The majority of the caretakers spoke positively of the visits. One caretaker felt that the visit had reassured the child that his mother was safe and had provided both mother and child with the optimism that they can be together again.

Asked if they had seen changes in the children after the first visit, sixteen of twenty-six caretakers (of children, not infants) had viewed no changes. Of those

who had, four described positive changes in the children. These included being more out-going, happier, more relaxed and less grumpy and anxious. Two of the caretakers reported that the children were wound-up, racey and tired after the visit. One mentioned that the child was angry because the mother could not come home with him. One child was viewed as a little more defiant and another as preoccupied with thoughts of his mother. Only one caretaker reported serious negative effects to a child after a visit. This foster mother described the boy as 'unmanageable, uncontrollable and emotionally disabled' as a result of seeing his mother again. This case involved a custody battle between the mother and the caretaker.

Sixteen caretakers reported that the children had appeared to be more talkative after the visit. Many had talked about the visit, how they had enjoyed it and had wished it were longer. One child had told his caretaker that his mommy was 'sweet' and that it had been "more like it used to be". Other children had spoken eagerly of up-coming visits or their mother's release.

The majority of caretakers (21) reported that the children were no more or less of a discipline problem after the visit. One believed the child to be better behaved, while four caretakers thought the children they were caring for were not as well-behaved. As for the display of sadness, most saw no differences after the visit. Two caretakers saw more sadness and two saw less sadness displayed.

While the observations of both mothers and caretakers have shed some light on the effects of the program on children, much more information is needed. However, it is very difficult to obtain this type of information. Often children are too young to understand and verbalize their feelings. Their mothers are not available during the incarceration to view the effects on a daily basis. Although caretakers are in a position to offer the best feedback about children, in some cases it is viewed as an invasion of privacy, and in others caretakers are either

oblivious to the feelings of the children or biased because of their desire to retain custody.

Lancaster staff were asked who they thought benefitted most from the Visiting Cottage Program. Seven of eleven staff members thought the children benefitted most. One believed it was the mother and the other three thought both mothers and children benefitted equally. A sampling of their responses shows the reasoning behind their choices.

> 'Both but mother does more. Gives her more strength in dealing with the time she had to do ahead. Helps her have something to look forward to.'
>
> 'Children like seeing their mothers and they're excited - nice environment, out in the country. Mothers are excited at first but grow tired of the children and the role of parent.'
>
> 'Some benefitted in that they were being made special. Some delighted from being with their mother, talking out feelings, expressing past anger. Others benefitted from the attention they got from staff, they seemed very needy and relished the attention.'
>
> 'The kids. Most have an incredible history and some assume responsibility for their mother's troubles. They desperately want their relationship with mommy to work. They're very affectionate and engaging. They don't do a lot of testing. They don't feel safe in their relationship yet.'

The staff were also asked whether or not the program had benefitted the Lancaster facility. Nine of eleven staff members believed that it has had a positive effect on Lancaster as a whole. A sampling of their responses are listed below.

> 'It's something, it says a lot for Lancaster - that we don't shut our door. Shows we're not afraid to try things that others wouldn't want to have any part of.'
>
> 'Staff and inmates alike act differently around children - there's a positive aspect when kids are around. More gentle.'
>
> 'Line staff learned it's not impossible to do something different. Opened up possibilities for future.'

Finally, two other possible benefits of the program emerged during the

evaluation. One major benefit is that it gave the caretakers some respite from the child care they had assumed after the incarceration. Some mothers and program staff reported how important that was especially for grandmothers (who are older) and for the relatives with children of their own. The second benefit was that the program gave DSS the opportunity to make evaluations, based on the visits, about future care and custody. They could determine if the mothers were really invested in their children and whether or not the visits were beneficial. Conversely, the extended visits gave some mothers a chance to prove themselves as interested and adequate future caretakers.

## B. Program Success

Although this was not an outcome evaluation, some informal measures of success were incorporated into this evaluation. A follow-up of participants after their release was planned, as was a check of recidivism for released participants. Lancaster staff were also interviewed about their perceptions of program success and their opinions about its future.

### 1. Follow-up Interviews

With the follow-up, the researcher hoped to compare the mothers' release plans with what actually occurred after release. However, the follow-up interviews were much more difficult to implement than had been thought. Mothers were often not residing at the residence of the phone number they had given prior to their release or were often not home to receive the calls. None of the participants returned calls when messages had been left. Only two of the eleven participants released before January 1, 1986 had been located for a follow-up

telephone interview.

Although no generalizations can be made from examining the follow-up results of two cases, they are worthy of discussion. Both mothers had planned to join their children at the maternal grandmother's residence where the children had lived during their mother's incarceration. The plans for both mothers had been identical - to find an apartment within a month so that they could be on their own with their children. One mother had hoped to locate employment, another had contacted the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (M.R.C.) for job training. Both were contacted more than two months after their release from Lancaster for the follow-up interview. One participant was still in the process of applying for job training with M.R.C. The other had been unable to secure employment. Neither of the women had been able to find housing that was both safe and affordable.

The participant who had been unable to find either a job or housing, discussed her discouragement in the follow-up interview. She related her frustrations regarding the searches for both and the fact that she had little optimism. Although she could continue living at her mother's, she did not like the crowded conditions and wanted a stable home of her own for her children. Her mood during this interview contrasted sharply with her mood at the exit interview. During that interview she had been very excited and full of hope, despite her anxieties about the future. She had been afraid of the temptation to return to drugs and felt that everybody in her family was just waiting for her to fail again. Although she did not mention a return to drug use in the follow-up, it was evident that things had not turned out for her as she had wished.

2. Recidivism

The recidivism rate for the participants released from Lancaster from the start of the program to 2/1/86 was 21%. That is, three participants were re-incarcerated (for at least thirty days) within a year of their release, two for new charges, and one for violation of her parole conditions. One of the women received a one year sentence for larceny of property. The other received a five year split sentence (six months to serve) for armed robbery. The woman who had violated her parole served out the five remaining months of her sentence. This 21% recidivism rate compares favorably to the 1984 rate of 24% for female residents released from Lancaster.

In addition to the one-year follow-up, two other participants were subsequently re-incarcerated for new offenses. A look at the five women with re-incarcerations reveals no differences as far as their frequency of participation in the program. However all five were short-termers and had been previously addicted to alcohol, heroin and/or cocaine. While all inmate mothers must deal with the issues of housing, child care, employment and finances upon release, women who had been substance abusers have to face an even greater hurdle. More research needs to be conducted concerning inmate mothers who are also substance abusers so that effective programs can be put into place.

3. Perceptions of Success

The eleven Lancaster staff who were interviewed judged the success of the program by their daily observations. Eight staff felt that the program was successful. Three viewed it as a mixture of success and failure. Almost all of the staff pointed out that while the program had been successfully implemented, their

expectations of it were not fulfilled. Seven staff felt that the program goals had been partially achieved. Two believed they had been fully achieved, and two had no opinion. Their explanations show their differentiation between their satisfaction with the implementation of the program and their disappointment with the end results.

> 'Our original expectations weren't met. We had a misconception that children would provide mother with a rehabilitation tool, that we were strengthening a bond that often wasn't there. It was unrealistic to expect the program to impact their relationship in any significant way. For some it did.'
>
> "We failed to understand women's limitations and the dynamics in the family. We didn't comprehend the magnitude and devastation of heroin and chemical addiction and its impact on families."
>
> 'We've made the time possible. We can't provide the quality part though.'
>
> 'We've met the goal of renewed contact. In some cases, it's strengthened ties. But it didn't accomplish the reuniting - I don't think we changed priorities.'
>
> 'Far below the expectations we started off with. Concept was good - reason was wrong. Incarceration didn't separate mothers and children.'
>
> "Success for some who used it the right way. Was a gaff for others who used it for wrong reasons."
>
> "Was a success. Not in the ways we expected. In a couple of cases, mothers did some growing and changing and left Lancaster with hopes and convictions that they were going to be good mothers and dedicated to children."

Asked if they thought the program should continue at Lancaster, ten of eleven staff believed that it should. They acknowledged their disappointment with the low participation and the questionable commitment of some of the participants. However, they also felt that since so much, time, energy and resources were expended in implementing the program, it should definitely continue as long as female residents remained at Lancaster. Many pointed out the need for refinements and improvements in the program, but viewed the basic structure of the program as sound.

"I think it's fine - it's a good program. Helpful to a few - that's how any program is. I feel it is successful - it takes time - you have to stick with it."

'It was a noble gesture. I think it should continue. There are lessons to be learned and adjustments to make.'

"Continue it because premise behind it was so good and it wasn't lost on everybody."

"First year of a program is very difficult and it's hard to do something new. To throw all that away would be foolish. The hardest part of the program is over."

"Have to continually examine it and try to improve it as you see how you can impact it. Reassess its needs with a clearer understanding of the limitations and continually adjust our expectations."

Some of the changes recommended revolved around the selection and screening of applicants. It was suggested that more preparation and better classification could be completed at Framingham. A more vigorous assessment of the participants at Lancaster was also suggested. One staff member thought that the program needed to get tougher and put more responsibility on the mother. He felt that when mothers violated the rules of the program, that their participation should be reassessed. As he put it, "I don't think it should be visits at any cost". A couple of staff felt that shorter visits should be scheduled at first so that both children and mothers could become reacquainted and gradually feel comfortable with each other. Their other suggestions have already been outlined in Chapter VII, Section A.

A couple of the inmate mothers were very insightful about the program and its participants. They too realized the potential of the program and hoped that the disappointments were outweighed by the perceived benefits. As one participant put it, "the Visiting Cottage Program is good. There's a lot of women who don't care about their kids but there are many who love their kids like me. Going in the trailers is like going home."

Several participants suggested that a similar program be set up within the walls of MCI-Framingham. While one inmate acknowledged the potential abuse for

such a program at Framingham, she felt that a vigorous screening procedure and strict guidelines could prevent abuse. Seven staff believed that such a program could be implemented at Framingham. Most of them saw the need for stricter security and guidelines, but felt that the concept would be workable in a medium security facility. Some pointed out that a visiting program at Framingham would be especially beneficial for long-termers so that they would not have their relationship with their children put on hold for years before they were transferred to Lancaster or Hodder House.

While the attempted follow-up failed to provide the pertinent family information sought on released participants, the recidivism rate and the staff's perceptions of success have shed some light on the success of the overall program. Perhaps in the future, a way can be found to gather information on the long-term effects of this type of program.

## VIII. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter summarizes the major policy-relevant findings and issues of this evaluation. Where appropriate, the researcher's recommendations for policy changes follow the summary of each issue. It should be noted that outside of some staff changes, the Visiting Cottage Program has not experienced many changes, nor have the major issues changed in the past year and a half.

During 1985, Lancaster had in its care and custody 79 female residents of whom 66 (84%) were mothers. Forty of these mothers (61%) sought participation in the Visiting Cottage Program. Of these 40 applicants, 30 women (75%) received extended visits in the trailer with 51 of their children during this first year. Those who did not receive visits either did not have the support of the children's caretaker or DSS, were released from the facility or had changed their minds about participation.

There were 111 visits over the course of the first year. Most visits occurred on the weekend, with the average number of overnights being two. Controlling for the length of time, the average mother had a visit every 42 days. Sixty-eight percent of the visits were with a single child. Most of the remaining visits involved two or three children.

A comparison of the VCP's first year applicants with the 1985 DOC female commitments indicated that the two populations did not differ substantially with regards to their social background or their criminal histories. The only notable difference was that the VCP applicants had appeared in court less often but were more likely to have been charged with prior person offenses than the 1985 commitments. The two populations differed sharply in their present offense information. The Visiting Cottage women were more likely to be presently

incarcerated for a person offense. As such, their sentence was more likely to be longer and they would serve more time before they were eligible for parole than the 1985 commitments.

The caretaking situations of the children of the VCP applicants were examined. Nearly two-thirds of the children (64%) were being cared for by relatives, most often by grandparents. Another 25% were living in foster homes. The remaining children were either on their own, living with friends or in residential care.

## A. Time of Separation

Seventy-four percent of the VCP applicants had been caring for all of their children prior to their incarceration. Similarly, of the 72 children who were minors and for whom caretaking situations were known, 75% had been cared for by their mothers prior to incarceration. This is very similar to what has been found by other researchers nationwide.

Ten of the 38 VCP mothers (26%) had at least one child whom they had not cared for prior to their incarceration. Of these ten, nine mothers had serious problems with substance abuse, namely heroin, cocaine or alcohol addictions. These women had either relinquished the care of some of their children voluntarily or had them taken away by the Department of Social Services due to abuse and/or neglect.

## B. Effects of Separation on Children

Through interviews with the inmate mothers and caretakers of the children, it was learned that the children of the VCP applicants were definitely affected by

the separation from their mothers at incarceration. Some children developed physical symptoms such as eating and sleeping disorders, increased sickness, and problems with developmental skills. Many children reacted emotionally immediately following the separation. These children exhibited signs of sadness, depression, loneliness and anger. They often appeared more withdrawn, quiet and shy. Several mothers and caretakers reported that children were experiencing problems in school. These included teasing by peers, acting-out behaviors, and problems with lower grades and academic achievement. Finally a few children had difficulty adjusting to their caretakers - a couple had gotten to the point of running away.

**Recommendation:** That personnel from all agencies involved with the separation and placement of children be cognizant of the effects of the separation and therefore attempt to make the transition as easy on them as is possible. For example, children should be allowed to see their mother after arrest so they will know that she is safe, that she cares, why she is absent and/or that they are not to blame for their mother's situation.

## C. Effects of Separation on Inmate Mothers

Inmate mothers also experienced effects as a result of being separated from their children. Initially most of the mothers reacted emotionally, feeling guilty, depressed, angry and frustrated due to the separation. Some women became withdrawn, while others acted out, ending up with severe disciplinary records. Although some mothers were lucky enough to have relatives who were immediately available to be caretakers, other mothers had to scramble to try to make arrangements or were forced to leave the choice of a caretaker to relatives or the Department of Social Services. Mothers, whose children were born while

incarcerated, had to deal with the difficulty of separation within days of the baby's birth. These and other mothers faced the possibility of losing the custody of their children permanently.

Throughout the incarceration, mothers worried about the adequacy of the childcare, and the welfare and safety of their children. The greatest cause of worry to the mothers in this study was the possibility that their relationship with their children would disintegrate. Mothers worried that their children were fine without them, would forget them or would become more attached to their current caretaker.

**Recommendation:** That the Department of Social Services and other involved agencies solicit the input of the inmate mothers regarding the placement of their children.

**Recommendation:** That DOC personnel, especially the correctional staff, receive training regarding the effects of separation from their children on inmate mothers. Learning about the effects, and thus the resultant behavior can help staff react to unacceptable behavior in a more appropriate manner and in general, can serve to ease the adjustment of the inmate mothers to the facility.

## D. Daily Program Operation

Both staff and participants alike had mostly positive things to say about the program's implementation and daily operation. Most initial extended visits proceeded smoothly and only minor difficulties were experienced during subsequent visits. Visiting children were well-behaved and there was never any evidence or even any suspicion of child abuse during the trailer visits.

Interviews with staff and program participants unveiled three main problems pertaining to the daily operation of the program. They are detailed below.

1. Location of the Trailers

Due to problems with utility hook-ups, the trailers are presently located in an area on the opposite side of the men's cottage from the women's cottage and close to the men's recreational area and field. Staff criticized the location because of its proximity to the men's cottage and the difficulty it presents to the correctional counselor staff for monitoring purposes. Participants criticized the location because it necessitates their walking back and forth between their cottage and the trailers for several activities including phone calls, visits, laundry, etc... Another difficulty is trying to explain to the children in the trailers that the area just outside of the trailers is out of bounds and that they must play (under their mother's supervision) in the area close to the women's cottage.

**Recommendation:** That the location of the trailers be reassessed so that either the trailers are moved to a site next to the women's cottage or a play area is fenced in adjacent to the trailer so that children need not be shuffled back and forth.

2. Activities for Children

Another area of concern seen by both staff and participants alike was the lack of activities for children during the visits. This is especially evident for children aged ten or older. Suggestions for improvements included the purchase of more games and toys, volunteers to create and supervise activities, supervised group trips to the movies, bowling or eating eat, and the designation of an area where older children can play softball, volleyball and basketball. Another suggestion involved using cadre caregivers to help develop and organize group activities.

**Recommendation:** That the Lancaster staff and Advisory Board develop ideas and implement more activites for children during the extended visits.

3. Transportation

Transportation of children to the facility for extended visits has been a constant problem and nuisance to program staff and participants alike. Despite multiple efforts to address these transportation needs, the problem still exists.

**Recommendation:** That the Advisory Board make a renewed effort to find alternative modes of transportation for children.

## E. Participation

Despite the participants' obvious enthusiasm about the program, there were not as many visits scheduled as had been expected. Although there was an average of 13.6 eligible participants per month, the number of actual visits only averaged 9.8 per month. No definitive reasons were found for the lower than expected participation.

Staff and inmate mother theories about the low participation fell into three categories. The first was that low participation was caused by practical shortcomings, such as problems with transportation, conflicting work schedules, preference for furloughs and problems with caretakers. The second category focused the criticism on some of the inmate mothers whom they believed to be selfish, immature and uncaring since they did not put their children as a priority. The third category of theories focused on the difficulties some mothers have with extended visits because of their need to readjust to the role of mother and the fears of rejection, inadequacy or instability that some have.

A statistical comparison of frequent, infrequent and non-participants revealed that the women who had frequent visits were a rather heterogeneous group. The women with no visits tended to be younger and unmarried. They were also more apt to be serving a sentence for a non-person offense and have more prior charges and incarcerations than the other two groups. These women have probably either never fully assumed the role of mother or have lost the legal custody of their children due to substance abuse and/or repeat incarcerations. The infrequent participants were older and none of them had been previously incarcerated. Nearly all of them participated in furloughs, thus enabling them to visit with their children outside of the facility.

The issue of participation/non-participation is very difficult to analyze. The decisions regarding participation can be made by the Department of Social Services, the caretakers, the inmate mother and/or the children. A myriad of factors are involved. They not only include the social, family, criminal history and present incarceration variables mentioned here, but also such issues as transportation, relationship between caretaker and mother and/or children, the prior and present relationship between mother and her children, the mother's commitment to her children and her own childhood experiences. To make matters more difficult, it is not necessarily the case that mothers who are frequent participants have quality visits with their children. Who makes better use of the program? The mother with regular monthly visits whose relationship with her children appears awkward and distant, or is it the mother who chooses to have an extended visit every other month but whose relationship with her children appears close-knit, comfortable and caring? Further research and reflection are needed in this area.

## F. Security and Disciplinary Issues

The security measures put into place at the program's inception have, for the most part, been appropriate and effective to ensure the safety of the participants and the success of the visits. During the program's first year, only one disciplinary report was issued during a visit. Lancaster staff were surprised over the relative absence of infractions and breeches of security experienced during the first year.

The one security problem that was considered to be serious was the suspicion that a small number of participants entertained male inmate visitors during trailer visits at night. Although never substantiated, this breech was believed to have been short-lived. Once staff became aware of its possibility, security was tightened and the program participants were warned of the possible consequences. It must be reiterated that outside of this problem, no other serious infractions were associated with the program's existence, much to the relief of Lancaster staff.

**Recommendation:** As long as the trailers remain in the same location, the correctional counselors of the men's and women's cottages should closely coordinate their monitoring and security measures into a joint effort, reviewing them periodically.

## G. Program Staffing

The Visiting Cottage Program at Lancaster is staffed by a full-time Program Coordinator and a part-time Family Therapist. The Coordinator is responsible for screening applicants, contacting the caretakers and other crucial parties, and scheduling and monitoring visits. The Family Therapist provides individual counseling, group counseling and crisis intervention for both mothers and children and assists the Program Coordinator in monitoring the visits.

Most of the staff and participants had very high praise for the hard work and diligence exhibited by the program staff in the program's first year. However a number of staff, including program staff, believed that there should be an additional staff person working with the program. This might help alleviate the stress and inevitability of burn-out produced by the necessity of working long and varied hours (including weekends) as well as the intensity of problems encountered with inmate mothers and families. A few suggested that instead of adding a third position, it might be possible to assign a female correctional counselor to the program to help provide the extra coverage needed and help participants with the daily problems and needs associated with being a mother and a program participant. Another suggestion was that there should be two family therapists sharing the hours and the responsibilities.

**Recommendation:** That the Lancaster and Framingham administrators join to periodically re-evaluate the staffing of their respective extended visiting program, taking into consideration the suggestions given above.

## H. Quality of Visits

Since the idea behind the VCP is for the mother to spend quality time alone in the trailer, part of this evaluation focused on the quality of visits. The majority of inmate mothers who participated in the program spoke very highly regarding the quality of their visits with their children. They talked about the opportunity the program had given them to be alone with their children, enabling them to have long conversations, reaffirm and develop their relationships and reaccustom themselves to the role of mother. Almost all of the caretakers recognized the benefit of extended visits, supporting their continuance and noting that the children also wanted to return. Lancaster staff, on the other hand, were somewhat critical of

the quality of the visits. They felt some mothers were oblivious to their children and uncaring during the visits and were thus manipulating the program to benefit their own personal needs and not the relationship with their children. While an examination of the visits sheets confirms their complaints for some of the participants during some of the visits, it overwhelmingly reflects positive, quality visits. More than half of the participants were found to have consistently experienced positive visits. Another quarter of the participants had experienced both positive and negative visits.

It is the opinion of this researcher that the negative experiences that staff encountered with a few women heavily overshadowed the overall perception of the quality of visits. The Program Coordinator herself, at one time, was very discouraged about the quality of visits, but when pressed by an outsider to review them, found she was only focusing on two or three of over a dozen participants. Aside from the focus of staff, one must realize that one of the program goals is to re-establish the mother-child relationship. It should not be surprising that mothers who have been incarcerated for three to four years have lost touch with their children despite seeing them weekly or monthly for a two hour visit. Nor should the young mother who has been drug addicted since before her child's birth be expected to have a close relationship with her two year old. Relationships need time to develop and program staff have seen such development over time with some program participants. As long as the children are safe and happy, perhaps the visits should be viewed as opportunities to develop or reaffirm the mother-child relationship while a mother is still incarcerated.

**Recommendation:** That all of the correctional staff who work closely with the participants of the extended visiting programs at Lancaster and Hodder House be made aware, through training and discussion seminars, of the issues and problems that are associated with the visits and the families. They should be made aware of

the programs' objectives of reuniting families, developing relationships, and preparing mothers to be with their children upon release.

## I. Inmates as Mothers

During the first year of the Visiting Cottage Program at Lancaster, staff experienced changes in their perceptions of inmate mothers at two levels. The first level was that staff saw changes in participant motivation, use and enthusiasm in the program over the first year. The Program Coordinator noted how the enthusiasm and cooperation exhibited by the initial participants became lost during the summer months. At that time the number of eligible participants was low. This was reflective of the decrease in the overall female population at Lancaster. With some prodding of Framingham classification staff, a new wave of female transfers arrived at Lancaster, all within a short period of time. Many of these transfers were long-term inmates who had been at Framingham for three to five years. The overall attitude of the program participants changed from apathy to cynicism and subtle manipulation. Perhaps a more gradual but steady transfer of women to Lancaster could have averted the shifts in attitude that the program experienced due to participant turnover.

The second level of change in staff's perceptions of inmates as mothers was on a more personal level. About half of the staff were disappointed by the quality of mothering that they witnessed during the visits. Other staff were more sympathetic and believed that their inital expectations had been unrealistically high. Several suggested that it was not sufficient to simply put mothers with their children in trailers. They acknowledged that some mothers need counseling and additional parental skills. They also suggested that where there is concern about the mothering skills or the mother-child relationship, that initial visits be

scheduled for a single day or one overnight rather than an entire weekend. Again, all staff did note how they were especially pleased and impressed with some of the mothering they viewed.

**Recommendation:** That both Lancaster and Framingham staff make a joint effort to ensure a steady but gradual flow of potential female participants to prevent disrupting shifts in the attitudes of program participants.

**Recommendation:** That the Program Coordinator explore an increased use of day only or one overnight for inital visits. This might help prevent both parties from being overwhelmed and to gradually develop or re-establish their relationship.

## J. Impact on Lancaster Staff

It was obvious throughout the interviews that the Visiting Cottage program had a significant impact on staff especially the female correctional counselors. In the planning stages, the line staff were very apprehensive because they were afraid of how the program would affect their duties and the facility in general. Many had expected complete chaos and thus, an increased workload for them.

Over time, the effects varied depending on the staff's direct contact with the program. For the most part, the male correctional staff viewed the program as a nuisance, causing them to spend more time monitoring the male inmates housed next to the trailers. With the rumors of male visitors, the male line staff basically concluded that while the program might have merit, it did not belong in a co-correctional environment.

The female correctional counselors, especially those who worked during the times when visits occurred, were faced with another side of the residents that they were not exposed to before - inmates as mothers. As can be seen throughout the report, many staff were disappointed in participants as mothers and the quality of

their visits. Unlike program staff, these line staff were often not privy to the personal and often sensitive information regarding the family lives of these women. They therefore viewed the action of participants in a void and hence, made different, and at times incorrect conclusions.

Program staff, on the other hand, because of their full knowledge of the family situations, had to deal with complex issues and problems associated with many of the families. Since they must keep the confidentiality of the information, they had to deal with these problems alone.

As mentioned in the report, clinical supervision has been made available for the program staff and some in-house training has been given to the female correctional line staff. Both have been received very well. They allow staff to process their feelings and reactions concerning the program, as well as serve to bring a more realistic view of the family lives of the participants.

**Recommendation:** That the clinical supervision of program staff and the training of female correctional staff be continued and reviewed indefinitely.

**Recommendation:** That any new site of an extended visiting program involve, as a matter of course, training of the line staff regarding what to expect of the inmate mothers and visits and then continual training to process staff reactions.

## K. Comparison of Long-Term and Short-Term Inmate Mothers

The 38 first-year program applicants were divided into two groups: the 24 short-term offenders who had been incarcerated for eight months or less and the 14 long-term offenders who had been incarcerated for twenty months or more. A number of comparisons were made between the two groups. No substantial differences were found between the short- and long-termers as far as social background and criminal history data. The only two significant differences were

that short-termers were more apt to be married and to have previously been charged with drug offenses than long-termers. When their substance abuse histories were examined, short-termers were also much more likely to have had a serious problem with drug or alcohol abuse. As would be expected, the present offense of the long-termers was more likely to be a person or sex offense compared to a property, drug or other offense for short-termers.

A comparison of the family situations of the two groups unveiled a disintegration in the familes of the long-termers. Children of long-termers were more likely to be in the custody of DSS and in the care of foster parents than the children of short-termers. They were also more apt to be living apart from their siblings, to be out of contact with their fathers and to have lost touch with their mothers and their extended families. With the years of incarceration chipping away at the mother-child relationship, it should not be surprising that long-termers were also more apt to have infrequent or no program visits with their children (57%) compared to short-termers (38%).

Although the short-termers appear to fare well in comparison to the long-term inmate mothers, many of them have substance abuse problems with which to contend. In addition to being more apt to have prior drug charges and a history of serious substance abuse, more VCP short-termers had been separated from at least one of their children prior to their incarceration. Although their incarcerations are short-lived, many of the short-termers will have to face again the temptation of drugs and thus, the chance of losing their children permanently. For these women, substance abuse must be addressed first.

**Recommendation:** That policy-makers and DOC planners take into account the differing needs of long-term inmate mothers and short-term inmate mothers when planning programs and making policy decisions. For example, since short-termers are most often repeat drug offenders, consideration should be given to

alternative placements in the community where they can receive the appropriate substance abuse help and maintain contact with their children.

## L. Utilization of Treatment Services

The Family Therapist position was created to help prepare mothers for extended visits and to help them deal with issues surrounding the visits and mothering in general. Despite the participants' assertions that they had been prepared for their visits and that the services of the Family Therapist were highly regarded, there was an underutilization of those services. In addition to individual counseling and crisis intervention, the Family Therapist sought to establish a mothers' group and then Systematic Training in Effective Parenting (STEP) seminars, both without success.

This study has found that, at least for some inmate mothers, it is not enough to simply put together mothers and children in a comfortable environment. Some mothers, due to lengthy incarcerations or substance abuse, have little experience in a mothering capacity. Others, especially the long-termers, have not had to play that role for a long time and might experience difficulties recapturing it. In light of this, it would seem crucial that these mothers be involved in seminars or groups where they could get support, learn parenting skills and unload their feelings.

Some states have mandated that inmate mothers finish some type of parental training or mother's discussion seminar prior to participating in a visiting program with their children. This notion has been discussed at several Advisory Board meetings, however, no conclusions have been reached.

**Recommendation:** That the program staff from Framingham, Lancaster and Hodder House join to discuss and recommend future policy in this area.

M. Interagency Model

The Visiting Cottage Program was the first DOC program to have a true interagency model implemented. Although staff from the Department of Correction took the lead, they were joined by representatives from the state Departments of Social Services, Public Health, and Mental Health, the Office for Children, Aid to Incarcerated Mothers (A.I.M.) and the Women's Health and Learning Center in the planning of the program. The inclusion of all of these participants made for a rich, albeit controversial Planning and Advisory Board. Despite the difficulty encountered during the planning process because of the vastly differing philosophies and goals of the representatives, the end result was superior. Before it was implemented, every anticipated concern or problem raised by the Board was discussed and resolved and the program had the cooperation of all the agencies necessary to run the program. The program's smooth implementation can partly be attributed to the careful planning of the Board. Over time, another benefit of an interagency model emerged. Many of the agencies involved contributed valuable resources, services and manpower to the program. These came in the form of transportation for children, training, provisions for the trailers and the education of relevant parties about the program.

It is the opinion of this researcher that the interagency model was an invaluable force behind the Visiting Cottage Program. Many issues have been worked through and much has been learned about inmate mothers in the process.

**Recommendation:** That any extended visiting programs in the DOC will draw upon the resources of either the Board itself or individually upon its past and present members, as well as the expertise of the past and present Visiting Cottage Program staff.

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## Summary

Overall it is safe to say that the Lancaster Visiting Cottage Program was implemented as planned and has met many of its program objectives. In addition, this evaluation has hopefully shed some light on the less tangible program objectives such as reuniting mothers with their children, preparing mothers to resume care of their children upon release and assisting both with separation issues. Continual discussion and monitoring in these areas is recommended for the Lancaster, Hodder House and other similar extended visiting programs.

As to its continuation, all of the participants and most of the Lancaster staff believed the program should continue. Participants valued the opportunity to visit with their children in a private, comfortable setting where they could develop or re-establish their relationships with their children, reaffirm their roles as mothers and learn new parenting skills. Despite assertions by some of the staff that the program should not be situated in a co-correctional environment, it was believed that the program should continue at Lancaster as long as female immates are housed there.

The program has been viewed as both a success and a disappointment by the Lancaster administration, line staff and program staff. It is a success because it was implemented as planned and did not cause as much chaos and controversy as expected. It also proved that a correctional facility can embark on a creative project despite the subtle pressure put forth by staff, and sometimes inmates, against change. It has been viewed as somewhat of a disappointment, mostly because of the lower than expected participation.

The combination of a successful yet disappointing program could lead to a complacent attitude about the program's continuation. If the program is allowed to simply continue, the quality of the program will suffer. With a turnover of staff at

every level and a constant turnover of participants, it is important to continually reassess the objectives, staffing and resources of the program. This should not only be carried out by the Advisory Board, but also by the administrators at Lancaster. To aid in this reassessment, the Program Coordinator should continue to collect information about visits and compile statistics regarding participation. Although the reassessment of a program that is no longer new and exciting might appear tedious, it is important so that the key ingredients which made it successful are not allowed to disappear and the program slip into mediocrity.

Lancaster staff believed that a similar program could be easily implemented in any minimum security or pre-release setting housing female inmates. As mentioned previously, Hodder House is implementing a visiting program of its own. Several staff felt that some type of extended visiting program could be successfully implemented with close care and tightened security at a medium security facility such as MCI-Framingham. For long-term offenders who must remain at Framingham for three to five years, such a program would be especially welcomed.

This evaluation has found that an extended visiting program for inmate mothers and their children is feasible in at least a minimum security correctional facility. Both the problems and benefits have been highlighted and will hopefully generate further discussion and debate. It is hoped that this report and the knowledge gained by this researcher will be utilized both by staff within the Massachusetts DOC and by planners in other jurisdictions.

## IX. FOOTNOTES

1. Two national surveys of correctional facilities (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978; Glick and Neto, 1977) found the percentage of mothers in the population to be 67% and 73% respectively. Other studies have found it to be 67% (Baunach, 1985) and 65% (Zalba, 1964).

2. These figures were taken from the following published study: McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978:60; Baunach, 1985:30; Stanton, 1980:38 and Zalba, 1964:44.

3. These figures were taken from the following published studies: Baunach, 1985:34; Stanton, 1980:49; and Zalba, 1964:86.

4. These figures were taken from the following published studies: Zalba, 1964:70; McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978:58 - 66; Stanton, 1980:57; and Baunach, 1985:43.

5. Chi square is a test of statistical significance. It allows one to determine whether a systematic relationship exists between two variables. This is accomplished by computing the cell frequencies which would be expected if no relationship existed between the variables. The expected cell frequencies are then compared to the actual values found in the table, using a specific formula.

6. Time to parole eligibility could not be calculated for those with a complex sentence. Therefore the N for the Visiting Cottage Women was 33 and for the 1985 commitments it was 477.

7. The quotes throughout the report are either surrounding by "full quotation marks" or 'partial quotation marks'. The former is used to denote actual quotes from the interviews. The latter are used when the researcher paraphrased the response of the interviewee.

8. Information was not available for one mother and her two day-only trailer visits. Therefore the total number of visits in this table adds up to only 109, instead of 111 visits.

9. Visit sheets were not available for two participants who experienced day-only visits.

## X. APPENDIX

Following are other tables generated in this study that were used in describing the Lancaster residents who sought participation in the Visiting Cottage Program. The tables appear in the same order that the data from them were presented in the report. Again the N for these tables is 38, unless otherwise noted. Some of the variables had missing information.

### Description of the Population

**Table 14**

**Social Background Data**

| | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Race and Ethnic Origin | | |
| White | 22 | (58) |
| Black | 11 | (29) |
| Black or White Hispanic | 5 | (13) |
| Marital Status | | |
| Married | 7 | (18) |
| Single | 20 | (53) |
| Divorced/Separated | 10 | (26) |
| Widowed | 1 | (3) |
| Age on 1/1/85 | | |
| 20 and Younger | 3 | (8) |
| 21 - 25 Years | 8 | (21) |
| 26 - 30 Years | 15 | (39) |
| 31 - 35 Years | 8 | (21) |
| 36 Years or More | 4 | (10) |

| | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Prior Address - Cities and Towns | | |
| Boston | 9 | (24) |
| Fitchburg/Leominster | 2 | (5) |
| New Bedford | 2 | (5) |
| Lowell/Lawrence | 2 | (5) |
| Springfield | 12 | (32) |
| Worcester | 6 | (16) |
| Other Mass. | 4 | (10) |
| Out of State | 1 | (3) |
| Last Grade Completed | | |
| 8th or Less | 2 | (5) |
| Some High School | 8 | (21) |
| High School Grad | 13 | (34) |
| Some College | 5 | (13) |
| Unknown | 10 | (26) |
| Number of Children | | |
| One | 14 | (37) |
| Two | 10 | (26) |
| Three | 6 | (16) |
| Four or More | 8 | (21) |
| Age of Children (N=81) | | |
| Two Years or Less | 6 | (7) |
| Three to Five Years | 19 | (23) |
| Six to Eight Years | 19 | (23) |
| Nine to Twelve years | 15 | (18) |
| Thirteen to Seventeen Years | 13 | (16) |
| Eighteen Years and Older | 9 | (11) |
| Sex of Children (N=81) | | |
| Male | 44 | (54) |
| Female | 37 | (46) |
| Legal Custody of Children While Incarcerated (N=81) | | |
| Mother | 14 | (17) |
| Father | 5 | (6) |
| Grandparent(s) | 22 | (27) |
| Other Relative | 5 | (6) |
| D.S.S. | 23 | (28) |
| Other | 12 | (15) |

| | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Separation From Siblings | | |
| Yes | 12 | (32) |
| No | 12 | (32) |
| N.A. - Only Child | 14 | (37) |
| Contact With Father? (N=81) | | |
| Yes | 38 | (47) |
| No | 36 | (44) |
| Father Incarcerated | 4 | (5) |
| Unknown | 3 | (4) |
| Involvement With D.S.S. | | |
| Yes | 15 | (39) |
| No | 23 | (60) |

**Table 15**

**Criminal History Data**

| | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Age at First Court Appearance | | |
| 19 Years or Younger | 15 | (40) |
| 20 to 25 Years | 13 | (34) |
| 26 to 29 Years | 4 | (10) |
| 30 Years or Older | 1 | (3) |
| Unknown | 5 | (13) |
| Department of Youth Services Commitment | | |
| Yes | 2 | (5) |
| No | 36 | (95) |
| Total Number of Court Appearances | | |
| 1st Offense | 5 | (13) |
| 2 - 5 | 10 | (26) |
| 6 - 8 | 8 | (21) |
| 9 - 11 | 4 | (10) |
| 12 or More | 6 | (16) |
| Unknown | 5 | (13) |

| | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Number of Person Offenses | | |
| None | 13 | (34) |
| 1 - 3 | 16 | (42) |
| 4 or More | 9 | (24) |
| Number of Sex Offenses | | |
| None | 36 | (95) |
| One or More | 2 | (5) |
| Number of Property Offenses | | |
| None | 16 | (42) |
| 1 - 3 | 7 | (18) |
| 4 or More | 15 | (39) |
| Number of Drug Offenses | | |
| None | 17 | (45) |
| 1 - 3 | 13 | (34) |
| 4 or More | 8 | (21) |
| Number of Alcohol Offenses | | |
| None | 32 | (84) |
| One or More | 6 | (16) |
| Number of Escape Offenses | | |
| None | 37 | (97) |
| One or More | 1 | (3) |
| Total Number Prior Adult Incarcerations | | |
| None | 30 | (79) |
| One | 3 | (8) |
| Two or More | 5 | (13) |
| Number of Adult Paroles | | |
| None | 34 | (90) |
| One | 4 | (10) |
| Number of Adult Parole Violations | | |
| Never Paroled | 34 | (90) |
| None | 3 | (8) |
| One | 1 | (3) |

Table 16

Present Offense and Incarceration Data

| | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| **Age at Incarceration** | | |
| Twenty Years or Younger | 4 | (10) |
| 21 - 25 Years | 11 | (29) |
| 26 - 29 Years | 12 | (32) |
| 30 - 39 Years | 10 | (26) |
| 40 Years or Older | 1 | (3) |
| **Maximum Sentence** | | |
| Less than 1 Year | 2 | (5) |
| 1 Year | 5 | (13) |
| 2 - 5 Years | 9 | (24) |
| 6 - 9 Years | 5 | (13) |
| 10 Years | 10 | (26) |
| 11 - 24 Years | 4 | (10) |
| Life | 3 | (8) |
| **Time Between Commitment and January 1, 1985** | | |
| Committed After January 1 | 10 | (26) |
| 6 Months or Less | 11 | (29) |
| 7 Months to 1 Year | 3 | (8) |
| 1 - 2 Years | 4 | (10) |
| 2 - 3 Years | 1 | (3) |
| 3 - 4 Years | 6 | (16) |
| 4 Years or More | 3 | (8) |
| **Time Between January 1, 1985 and Parole Eligibility Date** | | |
| 6 Months or Less | 9 | (24) |
| 7 Months To 1 Year | 9 | (24) |
| 1 - 2 Years | 8 | (21) |
| 2 Years or More | 6 | (16) |
| N.A. | 6 | (16) |
| **Prior Alcohol and Drug History** | | |
| Drugs | 18 | (47) |
| Alcohol | 1 | (3) |
| Both | 3 | (8) |
| None | 16 | (42) |

| | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| **Status By End of Evaluation Period** | | |
| Still at Lancaster | 12 | (32) |
| Returned to Framingham | 5 | (13) |
| Paroled | 13 | (34) |
| Good Conduct Discharge | 6 | (16) |
| Released by Court | 1 | (3) |
| Transferred to Pre-Release | 1 | (3) |
| **For Those Released, Time at Lancaster (N=26)** | | |
| Three Months or Less | 4 | (15) |
| 3 - 6 Months | 14 | (54) |
| 6 Months to 1 Year | 3 | (12) |
| 1 - 2 Years | 5 | (19) |
| **Number of Furloughs** | | |
| None | 19 | (50) |
| 1 - 10 | 13 | (34) |
| 11 - 20 | 3 | (8) |
| 21 or More | 3 | (8) |

Table 17

Comparison of Frequent, Infrequent and Non-Participants in the VCP Program

| | Chi Square Value | Difference Significant at: |
|---|---|---|
| **Social Background** | | |
| Race | 0.9 | N.S. |
| Marital Status | 3.6 | N.S. |
| Age on 1/1/85 | 4.8 | 0.1 |
| Last Grade Completed | 0.3 | N.S. |
| Number of Children | 0.4 | N.S. |
| Age of Children | 0.5 | N.S. |
| Present Legal Custody | 1.5 | N.S. |
| Present Caretaker | 0.7 | N.S. |
| Prior Legal Custody | 0.4 | N.S. |
| Prior Caretaker | 0.5 | N.S. |
| Separation from Siblings | 0.3 | N.S. |
| Contact With Father | 1.2 | N.S. |
| Involvement With D.S.S. | 1.6 | N.S. |
| **Criminal History** | | |
| Age at First Court Appearance | 2.8 | N.S. |
| Number of Court Appearances | 1.9 | N.S. |
| Number of Person Offenses | 1.6 | N.S. |
| Number of Property Offenses | 0.7 | N.S. |
| Number of Sex Offenses | 1.7 | N.S. |
| Number of Drug Offenses | 1.8 | N.S. |
| Number of Alcohol Offenses | 2.4 | N.S. |
| Number of Escape Offenses | 0.8 | N.S. |
| Number of Prior Adult Incarcerations | 3.8 | 0.1 |
| **Present Offense and Incarceration** | | |
| Age at Incarceration | 1.6 | N.S |
| Present Offense | 2.5 | N.S. |
| Maximum Sentence | .03 | N.S. |
| Minimum Sentence | 5.2 | 0.1 |
| Prior Drug and Alcohol History | 0.4 | N.S. |
| Total Number of Furloughs | 7.8 | .05 |
| Time to Parole Eligibility | 3.0 | N.S. |
| Minimum/Pre-Release Status | 1.3 | N.S. |

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